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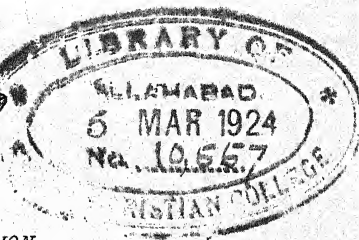
CHARLES READE

THE CLOISTER AND THE HEARTH

A TALE OF THE MIDDLE AGES

SELECTIONS EDITED BY THE

REV. A. E. HALL



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NOTE

THE following selections from *The Cloister and the Hearth* have been chosen rather to give stirring scenes from the book than to preserve the thread of the story. In order that their connection may be seen, a summary of the whole book has been inserted at the commencement of the Notes. Roman numerals, corresponding to those at the head of each extract, have been inserted in this summary to indicate from which parts of the story the various extracts come. The few brief notes are intended to explain difficult words and phrases, or to make clear the connection between the different extracts. The punctuation has been revised throughout the book.

A. E. H.

His skull was covered
with these white - porous
interrogatives
depreciated the green
pleasantly of the under-
side.

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THE CLOISTER AND THE HEARTH

I.

It was past the middle of the fifteenth century; Louis XI. was sovereign of France; Edward IV. was wrongful King of England; and Philip "the Good," having by force and cunning dispossessed his cousin Jacqueline, and broken her heart, reigned undisturbed this many years in Holland, where our tale begins.

Elias, and Catherine his wife, lived in the little town of Tergou. He traded, wholesale and retail, in cloth, silk; brown holland, and, above all, in curried leather, a material highly valued by the middling people, because it would stand twenty years' wear, and turn an ordinary knife, no small virtue in a jerkin of that century, in which folk were so liberal of their steel; even at dinner a man would leave his meat awhile, and carve you his neighbour, on a very moderate difference of opinion.

The couple were well to do, and would have been free from all earthly care, but for nine children. When these were coming into the world, each was hailed with rejoicings, and the saints were thanked, not expostulated with; and when parents and children were all young together, the latter were looked upon as lovely little playthings invented by Heaven for the amusement, joy, and evening solace of people in business.

But as the olive-branches shot up, and the parents grew older, and saw with their own eyes the fate of large families, misgivings and care mingled with their love. They belonged to a singularly wise and provident people: in Holland reckless parents were as rare as disobedient children. So now when the huge loaf came in on a gigantic trencher, looking like a fortress in its

moat, and, the tour of the table once made, seemed to have melted away, Elias and Catherine would look at one another and say, "Who is to find bread for them all when we are gone?"

At this observation the younger ones needed all their filial respect to keep their little Dutch countenances; for in their opinion dinner and supper came by nature like sunrise and sunset, and, so long as that luminary should travel round the earth, so long *must* the brown loaf go round their family circle, and set in their stomachs only to rise again in the family oven. But the remark awakened the national thoughtfulness of the elder boys, and being often repeated, set several of the family thinking, some of them good thoughts, some ill thoughts, according to the nature of the thinkers.

"Kate, the children grow so, this table will soon be too small."

"We cannot afford it, Eli," replied Catherine, answering not his words, but his thought, after the manner of women.

Their anxiety for the future took at times a less dismal but more mortifying turn. The free burghers had their pride as well as the nobles; and these two could not bear that any of their blood should go down in the burgh after their decease.

So by prudence and self-denial they managed to clothe all the little bodies, and feed all the great mouths, and yet put by a small hoard to meet the future; and, as it grew and grew, they felt a pleasure the miser hoarding for himself knows not.

One day the eldest boy but one, aged nineteen, came to his mother, and, with that outward composure which has so misled some persons as to the real nature of this people, begged her to intercede with his father to send him to Amsterdam, and place him with a merchant. "It is the way of life that likes me: merchants are wealthy; I am good at numbers; prithee, good mother, take my part in this, and I shall ever be, as I am now, your debtor."

Catherine threw up her hands with dismay and incredulity. "What! leave Tergou?"

"What is one street to me more than another? If I can leave the folk of Tergou, I can surely leave the stones."

"What! quit your poor father now he is no longer young?"

"Mother, if I can leave you, I can leave him."

"What! leave your poor brothers and sisters, that love you so dear?"

"There are enough in the house without me."

"What mean you, Richart? Who is more thought of than you? Stay, have I spoken sharp to you? Have I been unkind to you?"

"Never that I know of; and if you had, you should never hear of it from me. Mother," said Richart gravely, but the tear was in his eye, "it all lies in a word, and nothing can change my mind. There will be one mouth less for you to feed."

"There now, see what my tongue has done," said Catherine, and the next moment she began to cry. For she saw her first young bird on the edge of the nest trying his wings to fly into the world. Richart had a calm, strong will, and she knew he never wasted a word.

It ended as nature has willed all such discourse shall end: young Richart went to Amsterdam with a face so long and sad as it had never been seen before, and a heart like granite.

That afternoon at supper there was one mouth less. Catherine looked at Richart's chair and wept bitterly. On this Elias shouted roughly and angrily to the children, "Sit wider, can't ye: sit wider!" and turned his head away over the back of his seat awhile, and was silent.

Richart was launched, and never cost them another penny; but to fit him out and place him in the house of Vander Stegen, the merchant, took all the little hoard but one gold crown. They began again. Two years passed, Richart found a niche in commerce for his brother Jacob, and Jacob left Tergou directly after dinner, which was at eleven in the forenoon. At supper that day Elias remembered what had happened

the last time; so it was in a low whisper he said, "Sit wider, dears!" Now until that moment, Catherine *would* not see the gap at table, for her daughter Catherine had besought her not to grieve to-night, and she had said, "No, sweetheart, I promise I will not, since it vexes my children." But when Elias whispered "Sit wider!" says she, "Ay! the table will soon be too big for the children, and you thought it would be too small;" and having delivered this with forced calmness, she put up her apron the next moment, and wept sore.

"'Tis the best that leave us," sobbed she; "that is the cruel part."

"Nay! nay!" said Elias, "our children are good children, and all are dear to us alike. Heed her not! What God takes from us still seems better than what He spares to us: that is to say, men are by nature unthankful—and women silly."

"And I say Richart and Jacob were the flower of the flock," sobbed Catherine.

The little coffer was empty again, and to fill it they gathered like ants. In those days speculation was pretty much confined to the card-and-dice business. Elias knew no way to wealth but the slow and sure one. "A penny saved is a penny gained," was his humble creed. All that was not required for the business and the necessities of life went into the little coffer with steel bands and florid key. They denied themselves in turn the humblest luxuries, and then, catching one another's looks, smiled; perhaps with a greater joy than self-indulgence has to bestow. And so in three years more they had gleaned enough to set up their fourth son as a master-tailor, and their eldest daughter as a robemaker, in Tergou. Here were two more provided for: their own trade would enable them to throw work into the hands of this pair. But the coffer was drained to the dregs, and this time the shop too bled a little in goods if not in coin.

Alas! there remained on hand two that were unable to get their bread, and two that were unwilling. The unable ones were, 1, Giles, a dwarf, of the wrong sort,

half stupidity, half malice, all head and claws and voice, run from by dogs and unprejudiced females, and sided with through thick and thin by his mother; 2, Little Catherine, a poor little girl that could only move on crutches. She lived in pain, but smiled through it, with her marble face and violet eyes and long silky lashes; and fretful or repining word never came from her lips. The unwilling ones were Sybrandt, the youngest, a ne'er-do-weel, too much in love with play to work; and Cornelis, the eldest, who had made calculations, and stuck to the hearth, waiting for dead men's shoes. Almost worn out by their repeated efforts, and above all dispirited by the moral and physical infirmities of those that now remained on hand, the anxious couple would often say, "What will become of all these when we shall be no longer here to take care of them?" But when they had said this a good many times, suddenly the domestic horizon cleared, and then they used still to say it, because a habit is a habit, but they uttered it half mechanically now, and added brightly and cheerfully, "But thanks to St. Bavon and all the saints, there's Gerard."

Young Gerard was for many years of his life a son apart and distinct, object of no fears and no great hopes. No fears, for he was going into the Church, and the Church could always maintain her children by hook or by crook in those days; no great hopes, because his family had no interest with the great to get him a benefice, and the young man's own habits were frivolous, and, indeed, such as our cloth merchant would not have put up with in any one but a clerk that was to be. His trivialities were reading and penmanship, and he was so wrapped up in them that often he could hardly be got away to his meals. The day was never long enough for him; and he carried ever a tinder-box and brimstone matches, and begged ends of candles of the neighbours, which he lighted at unreasonable hours—ay, even at eight of the clock at night in winter, when the very burgomaster was abed. Endured at home, his practices were encouraged by the

monks of a neighbouring convent. They had taught him penmanship, and continued to teach him, until one day they discovered, in the middle of a lesson, that he was teaching them. They pointed this out to him in a merry way: he hung his head and blushed: he had suspected as much himself, but mistrusted his judgement in so delicate a matter. "But, my son," said an elderly monk, "how is it that you, to whom God has given an eye so true, a hand so subtle yet firm, and a heart to love these beautiful crafts, how is it you do not colour as well as write? A scroll looks but barren unless a border of fruit, and leaves, and rich arabesques surround the good words, and charm the sense as those do the soul and understanding; to say nothing of the pictures of holy men and women departed, with which the several chapters should be adorned, and not alone the eye soothed with the brave and sweetly blended colours, but the heart lifted by effigies of the saints in glory. Answer me, my son."

At this Gerard was confused, and muttered that he had made several trials at illuminating, but had not succeeded well; and thus the matter rested.

Soon after this a fellow-enthusiast came on the scene in the unwonted form of an old lady. Margaret, sister and survivor of the brothers Van Eyck, left Flanders, and came to end her days in her native country. She bought a small house near Tergou. In course of time she heard of Gerard, and saw some of his handiwork: it pleased her so well that she sent a female servant, Reicht Heynes, to ask him to come to her. This led to an acquaintance: it could hardly be otherwise, for little Tergou had never held so many as two zealots of this sort before. At first the old lady damped Gerard's courage terribly. At each visit she fished out of holes and corners drawings and paintings, some of them by her own hand, that seemed to him unapproachable; but if the artist overpowered him, the woman kept his heart up. She and Reicht soon turned him inside out like a glove: among other things, they drew from him what the good monks had failed to hit upon, the reason why he did not illuminate, viz., that he could not afford

the gold, the blue, and the red, but only the cheap earths; and that he was afraid to ask his mother to buy the choice colours, and was sure he should ask her in vain. Then Margaret Van Eyck gave him a little brush-gold, and some vermilion and ultramarine, and a piece of good vellum to lay them on. He almost adored her. As he left the house Reicht ran after him with a candle and two quarters: he quite kissed her. But better even than the gold and lapis-lazuli to the illuminator was the sympathy to the isolated enthusiast. That sympathy was always ready, and, as he returned it, an affection sprung up between the old painter and the young caligrapher that was doubly characteristic of the time.

Backed by an acquaintance so venerable, and strengthened by female sympathy, Gerard advanced in learning and skill. His spirits, too, rose visibly: he still looked behind him when dragged to dinner in the middle of an initial G; but once seated, showed great social qualities; likewise a gay humour, that had hitherto but peeped in him, shone out, and often he set the table in a roar, and kept it there, sometimes with his own wit, sometimes with jests which were glossy new to his family, being drawn from antiquity.

As a return for all he owed his friends the monks, he made them exquisite copies from two of their choicest MSS., viz., the life of their founder, and their Comedies of Terence, the monastery finding the vellum.

II.

WHILE the burgomaster was exposing Gerard at Tergou, Margaret had a trouble of her own at Sevenbergen. It was a housewife's distress, but deeper than we can well conceive. She came to Martin Wittenhaagen, the old soldier, with tears in her eyes.

"Martin, there's nothing in the house, and Gerard is coming, and he is so thoughtless. He forgets to sup at home. When he gives over work, then he runs

to me straight, poor soul; and often he comes quite faint. And to think I have nothing to set before my servant that loves me so dear."

Martin scratched his head. "What can I do?"

"It is Thursday; it is your day to shoot—sooth to say, I counted on you to-day."

"Nay," said the soldier, "I may not shoot when the Duke or his friends are at the chase; read else. I am no scholar." And he took out of his pouch a parchment with a grand seal. It purported to be a stipend and a licence given by Philip, Duke of Burgundy, to Martin Wittenhaagen, one of his archers, in return for services in the wars, and for a wound received at the Duke's side. The stipend was four merks yearly, to be paid by the Duke's almoner, and the licence was to shoot three arrows once a week, viz., on Thursday, and no other day, in any of the Duke's forests in Holland, at any game but a seven-year old buck or a doe carrying fawn; proviso, that the Duke should not be hunting on that day, or any of his friends. In this case Martin was not to go and disturb the woods on peril of his salary and his head, and a fine of a penny.

Margaret sighed and was silent.

"Come, cheer up, mistress," said he; "for your sake I'll peril my carcass; I have done that for many a one that was not worth your forefinger. It is no such mighty risk either. I'll but step into the skirts of the forest here. It is odds but they drive a hare or a fawn within reach of my arrow."

"Well, if I let you go, you must promise me not to go far, and not to be seen; far better Gerard went supperless than ill should come to you, faithful Martin."

The required promise given, Martin took his bow and three arrows, and stole cautiously into the wood: it was scarce a furlong distant. The horns were heard faintly in the distance, and all the game was afoot. "Come," thought Martin, "I shall soon fill the pot, and no one be the wiser." He took his stand behind a thick oak that commanded a view of an open glade, and strung his bow, a truly formidable weapon. It was of English yew, six feet two inches high, and

thick in proportion; and Martin, broad-chested, with arms all iron and cord, and used to the bow from infancy, could draw a three-foot arrow to the head, and, when it flew, the eye could scarce follow it, and the bowstring twanged as musical as a harp. A hare came cantering, then sat sprightly, and her ears made a capital V. Martin levelled his tremendous weapon at her. The arrow flew, the string twanged; but Martin had been in a hurry to pot her, and lost her by an inch: the arrow seemed to hit her, but it struck the ground close to her, and passed under her belly like a flash, and hissed along the short grass and disappeared. She jumped three feet perpendicular and away at the top of her speed. "Bungler!" said Martin; a sure proof he was not an habitual bungler, or he would have blamed the hare. He had scarcely fitted another arrow to his string when a wood-pigeon settled on the very tree he stood under. "Aha!" thought he, "you are small, but dainty." This time he took more pains; drew his arrow carefully, loosed it smoothly, and saw it, to all appearance, go clean through the bird, carrying feathers skyward like dust. Instead of falling at his feet, the bird, whose breast was torn, not fairly pierced, fluttered feebly away, and, by a great effort, rose above the trees, flew some fifty yards, and fell dead at last; but where he could not see for the thick foliage.

"Luck is against me," said he despondingly. But he fitted another arrow, and eyed the glade keenly. Presently he heard a bustle behind him, and turned round just in time to see a noble buck cross the open, but too late to shoot at him. He dashed his bow down with an imprecation. At that moment a long spotted animal glided swiftly across after the deer; its belly seemed to touch the ground as it went. Martin took up his bow hastily: he recognised the Duke's leopard. "The hunters will not be far from her," said he, "and I must not be seen. Gerard must go supperless this night."

He plunged into the wood, following the buck and leopard, for that was his way home. He had not gone

far when he heard an unusual sound ahead of him—leaves rustling violently and the ground trampled. He hurried in the direction. He found the leopard on the buck's back, tearing him with teeth and claw, and the buck running in a circle and bounding convulsively, with the blood pouring down his hide. Then Martin formed a desperate resolution to have the venison for Margaret. He drew his arrow to the head, and buried it in the deer, who, spite of the creature on his back, bounded high into the air, and fell dead. The leopard went on tearing him as if nothing had happened.

Martin hoped that the creature would gorge itself with blood, and then let him take the meat. He waited some minutes, then walked resolutely up, and laid his hand on the buck's leg. The leopard gave a frightful growl, and left off sucking blood. She saw Martin's game, and was sulky and on her guard. What was to be done? Martin had heard that wild creatures cannot stand the human eye. Accordingly, he stood erect, and fixed his on the leopard: the leopard returned a savage glance, and never took her eye off Martin. Then Martin, continuing to look the beast down, the leopard, brutally ignorant of natural history, flew at his head with a frightful yell, flaming eyes, and jaws and claws distended. He had but just time to catch her by the throat, before her teeth could crush his face; one of her claws seized his shoulder and rent it, the other, aimed at his cheek, would have been more deadly still, but Martin was old-fashioned, and wore no hat, but a scapulary of the same stuff as his jerkin, and this scapulary he had brought over his head like a hood; the brute's claw caught in the loose leather. Martin kept her teeth off his face with great difficulty, and griped her throat fiercely, and she kept rending his shoulder. It was like blunt reaping-hooks grinding and tearing. The pain was fearful; but, instead of cowering the old soldier, it put his blood up, and he gnashed his teeth with rage almost as fierce as hers, and squeezed her neck with iron force. The two pair of eyes flared at one another—and now the man's were

almost as furious as the brute's. She found he was throttling her, and made a wild attempt to free herself, in which she dragged his cowl all over his face and blinded him and tore her claw out of his shoulder, flesh and all; but still he throttled her with hand and arm of iron. Presently her long tail, that was high in the air, went down. "Aha!" cried Martin joyfully, and griped her like death; next, her body lost its elasticity, and he held a choked and powerless thing; he griped it still, till all motion ceased, then dashed it to the earth; then, panting, removed his cowl: the leopard lay mute at his feet with tongue protruding and bloody paw; and for the first time terror fell on Martin. "I am a dead man: I have slain the Duke's leopard." He hastily seized a few handfuls of leaves and threw them over her; then shouldered the buck, and staggered away, leaving a trail of blood all the way—his own and the buck's. He burst into Peter's house a horrible figure, bleeding and blood-stained, and flung the deer's carcass down.

"There—no questions," said he, "but broil me a steak on't; for I am faint."

Margaret did not see he was wounded; she thought the blood was all from the deer.

She busied herself at the fire, and the stout soldier stanchd and bound his own wound apart; and soon he and Gerard and Margaret were supping royally on broiled venison.

They were very merry; and Gerard, with wonderful thoughtfulness, had brought a flask of Schiedam, and under its influence Martin revived, and told them how the venison was got; and they all made merry over the exploit.

6
5
? Their mirth was strangely interrupted. Margaret's eye became fixed and fascinated, and her cheek pale with fear. She gasped, and could not speak, but pointed to the window with trembling finger. Their eyes followed hers, and there in the twilight crouched a dark form with eyes like glowworms.

It was the leopard.

While they stood petrified, fascinated by the eyes

of green fire, there sounded in the wood a single deep bay. Martin trembled at it.

"They have lost her, and laid muzzled blood-hounds on her scent; they will find her here, and the venison. Good-bye, friends, Martin Wittenhaagen ends here."

Gerard seized his bow, and put it into the soldier's hands.

"Be a man," he cried; "shoot her, and fling her into the wood ere they come up. Who will know?"

More voices of hounds broke out, and nearer.

"Curse her!" cried Martin; "I spared her once; now she must die, or I, or both more likely;" and he reared his bow, and drew his arrow to the head.

"Nay! nay!" cried Margaret, and seized the arrow. It broke in half: the pieces fell on each side the bow. The air at the same time filled with the tongues of the hounds: they were hot upon the scent.

"What have you done, wench? You have put the halter round my throat."

"No!" cried Margaret. "I have saved you: stand back from the window, both! Your knife, quick!"

She seized his long-pointed knife, almost tore it out of his girdle, and darted from the room. The house was now surrounded with baying dogs and shouting men.

The glowworm eyes moved not.

Margaret cut off a huge piece of venison, and ran to the window and threw it out to the green eyes of fire. They darted on it with a savage snarl; and there was a sound of rending and crunching: at this moment, a hound uttered a bay so near and loud it rang through the house; and the three at the window shrank together. Then the leopard feared for her supper, and glided swiftly and stealthily away with it towards the woods, and the very next moment horses and men and dogs came helter-skelter past the window, and followed her full cry. Martin and his companions breathed again: the leopard was swift, and would not be caught within a league of their house. They grasped hands. Margaret seized this opportunity, and cried a little; Gerard kissed the tears away.

To table once more, and Gerard drank to woman's wit: "'Tis stronger than man's force," said he.

"Ay," said Margaret, "when those she loves are in danger; not else."

To-night Gerard stayed with her longer than usual, and went home prouder than ever of her, and happy as a prince.

III.

THE next morning, at ten o'clock, Gerard and Margaret were in the church at Sevenbergen, he radiant with joy, she with blushes. Peter was also there, and Martin Wittenhaagen, but no other friend. Secrecy was everything. Margaret had declined Italy. She could not leave her father; he was too learned and too helpless. But it was settled they should retire into Flanders for a few weeks until the storm should be blown over at Tergou. The curé did not keep them waiting long, though it seemed an age. Presently he stood at the altar, and called them to him. They went hand in hand, the happiest in Holland. The curé opened his book.

But ere he uttered a single word of the sacred rite, a harsh voice cried "Forbear!" And the constables of Tergou came up the aisle and seized Gerard in the name of the law. Martin's long knife flashed out directly.

"Forbear, man!" cried the priest. "What! draw your weapon in a church, and ye who interrupt this holy sacrament, what means this impiety?"

"There is no impiety, father," said the burgomaster's servant respectfully. "This young man would marry against his father's will, and his father has prayed our burgomaster to deal with him according to the law. Let him deny it if he can."

"Is this so, young man?"

Gerard hung his head.

"We take him to Rotterdam to abide the sentence of the Duke."

At this Margaret uttered a cry of despair, and the

young creatures, who were so happy a moment ago, fell to sobbing in one another's arms so piteously, that the instruments of oppression drew back a step and were ashamed; but one of them that was good-natured stepped up, under pretence of separating them, and whispered to Margaret:

"Rotterdam? it is a lie. We but take him to our Stadthouse."

They took him away on horseback, on the road to Rotterdam; and, after a dozen halts, and by sly detours, to Tergou. Just outside the town they were met by a rude vehicle covered with canvas. Gerard was put into this, and about five in the evening was secretly conveyed into the prison of the Stadthouse. He was taken up several flights of stairs and thrust into a small room lighted only by a narrow window, with a vertical iron bar. The whole furniture was a huge oak chest.

Imprisonment in that age was one of the highroads to death. It is horrible in its mildest form; but in those days it implied cold, unbroken solitude, torture, starvation, and often poison. Gerard felt he was in the hands of an enemy.

"Oh, the look that man gave me on the road to Rotterdam. There is more here than my father's wrath. I doubt I shall see no more the light of day." And he kneeled down and commended his soul to God.

Presently he rose and sprang at the iron bar of the window, and clutched it. This enabled him to look out by pressing his knees against the wall. It was but for a minute; but in that minute he saw a sight such as none but a captive can appreciate.

Martin Wittenhaagen's back.

Martin was sitting, quietly fishing in the brook near the Stadthouse.

Gerard sprang again at the window, and whistled. Martin instantly showed that he was watching much harder than fishing. He turned hastily round and saw Gerard;—made him a signal, and taking up his line and bow, went quickly off.

Gerard saw by this that his friends were not idle;

yet he had rather Martin had stayed. The very sight of him was a comfort. He held on, looking at the soldier's retiring form as long as he could, then falling back somewhat heavily, wrenched the rusty iron bar, held only by rusty nails, away from the stone-work just as Ghysbrecht Van Swieten opened the door stealthily behind him. The burgomaster's eye fell instantly on the iron, and then glanced at the window; but he said nothing. The window was a hundred feet from the ground; and if Gerard had a fancy for jumping out, why should he balk it? He brought a brown loaf and a pitcher of water, and set them on the chest in solemn silence. Gerard's first impulse was to brain him with the iron bar and fly down the stairs; but the burgomaster seeing something wicked in his eye, gave a little cough, and three stout fellows, armed, showed themselves directly at the door.

"My orders are to keep you thus until you shall bind yourself by an oath to leave Margaret Brandt, and return to the Church, to which you have belonged from your cradle."

"Death sooner."

"With all my heart." And the burgomaster retired.

The first day of imprisonment is very trying, especially if to the horror of captivity is added the horror of utter solitude.

As the sun declined, Gerard's heart too sank and sank; with the waning light even the embers of hope went out. He was faint, too, with hunger; for he was afraid to eat the food Ghysbrecht had brought him; and hunger alone crows men. He sat upon the chest, his arms and his head drooping before him, a picture of despondency. Suddenly something struck the wall beyond him very sharply, and then rattled on the floor at his feet. It was an arrow; he saw the white feather. A chill ran through him—they meant then to assassinate him from the outside. He crouched. No more missiles came. He crawled on all fours, and took up the arrow; there was no head to it. He uttered a cry of hope: had a friendly hand

shot it? He took it up, and felt it all over: he found a soft substance attached to it. Then one of his eccentricities was of grand use to him. His tinder-box enabled him to strike a light; it showed him two things that made his heart bound with delight, none the less thrilling for being somewhat vague. Attached to the arrow was a skein of silk, and on the arrow itself were words written.

How his eyes devoured them, his heart panting the while!

Tell beloved, make fast the silk to thy knife and lower to us: but hold thine end fast: then count an hundred and draw up.

Gerard seized the oak chest, and with almost super-human energy dragged it to the window: a moment ago he could not have moved it. Standing on the chest and looking down, he saw figures at the tower foot. They were so indistinct, they looked like one huge form. He waved his bonnet to them with trembling hand: then he undid the silk rapidly but carefully, and made one end fast to his knife and lowered it till it ceased to draw. Then he counted a hundred. Then pulled the silk carefully up: it came up a little heavier. At last he came to a large knot, and by that knot a stout whipcord was attached to the silk. What could this mean? While he was puzzling himself Margaret's voice came up to him, low but clear, "Draw up, Gerard, till you see liberty." At the word Gerard drew the whipcord line up, and drew and drew till he came to another knot, and found a cord of some thickness take the place of the whipcord. He had no sooner begun to draw this up, than he found that he had now a heavy weight to deal with. Then the truth suddenly flashed on him, and he went to work and pulled and pulled till the perspiration rolled down him: the weight got heavier and heavier, and at last he was well nigh exhausted: looking down he saw in the moonlight a sight that revived him: it was as it were a great snake coming up to him out of the deep shadow cast by the tower. He gave a shout of joy, and a score more wild pulls, and lo! a stout new rope touched his hand: he

hauled and hauled, and dragged the end into his prison, and instantly passed it through both handles of the chest in succession, and knotted it firmly; then sat for a moment to recover his breath and collect his courage. The first thing was to make sure that the chest was sound, and capable of resisting his weight poised in mid-air. He jumped with all his force upon it. At the third jump the whole side burst open, and out scuttled the contents, a host of parchments.

After the first start and misgiving this gave him, Gerard comprehended that the chest had not burst, but opened: he had doubtless jumped upon some secret spring. Still it shook in some degree his confidence in the chest's powers of resistance; so he gave it an ally: he took the iron bar and fastened it with the small rope across the large rope, and across the window. He now mounted the chest, and from the chest, put his foot through the window, and sat half in and half out, with one hand on that part of the rope which was inside. In the silent night he heard his own heart beat.

The free air breathed on his face, and gave him the courage to risk what we must all lose one day—for liberty. Many dangers awaited him, but the greatest was the first getting on to the rope outside. Gerard reflected. Finally, he put himself in the attitude of a swimmer, his body to the waist being in the prison, his legs outside. Then holding the inside rope with both hands, he felt anxiously with his feet for the outside rope, and when he had got it, he worked it in between the palms of his feet, and kept it there tight: then he uttered a short prayer, and, all the calmer for it, put his left hand on the sill and gradually wriggled out. Then he seized the iron bar, and for one fearful moment hung outside from it by his right hand, while his left hand felt for the rope down at his knees; it was too tight against the wall for his fingers to get round it higher up. The moment he had fairly grasped it, he left the bar, and swiftly seized the rope with the right hand too; but in this manœuvre his body necessarily fell about a yard. A stifled cry came up from

below. Gerard hung in mid-air. He clenched his teeth, and nipped the rope tight with his feet and gripped it with his hands, and went down slowly hand below hand. He passed by one huge rough stone after another. He saw there was green moss on one. He looked up and he looked down. The moon shone into his prison window: it seemed very near. The fluttering figures below seemed an awful distance. It made him dizzy to look down: so he fixed his eyes steadily on the wall close to him, and went slowly down, down, down.

He passed a rusty, slimy streak on the wall: it was some ten feet long. The rope made his hands very hot. He stole another look up.

The prison window was a good way off now.

Down—down—down—down.

The rope made his hands sore.

He looked up. The window was so distant, he ventured now to turn his eyes downward again; and there, not more than thirty feet below him, were Margaret and Martin, their faithful hands upstretched to catch him should he fall. He could see their eyes and their teeth shine in the moonlight. For their mouths were open, and they were breathing hard.

"Take care, Gerard! oh, take care! Look not down."

"Fear me not," cried Gerard joyfully, and eyed the wall, but came down faster.

In another minute his feet were at their hands. They seized him ere he touched the ground, and all three clung together in one embrace.

"Hush! away in silence, dear one."

They stole along the shadow of the wall.

IV.

GHYSBRECHT VAN SWIETEN kept the key of Gerard's prison in his pouch. He waited till ten of the clock ere he visited him; for he said to himself, "A little hunger sometimes does well; it breaks 'em." At ten he crept

up the stairs with a loaf and pitcher, followed by his trusty servant well armed. Ghysbrecht listened at the door. There was no sound inside. He opened the door.

No Gerard.

Ghysbrecht stood stupefied.

Although his face was not visible, his body seemed to lose all motion in so peculiar a way, and then after a little he fell a trembling so, that the servant behind him saw there was something amiss, and crept close to him and peeped over his shoulder. At sight of the empty cell, and the rope, and iron bar, he uttered a loud exclamation of wonder; but his surprise doubled when his master, disregarding all else, suddenly flung himself on his knees before the empty chest, and felt wildly all over it with quivering hands, as if unwilling to trust his eyes in a matter so important.

The servant gazed at him in utter bewilderment.

"Why, master, what is the matter?"

Ghysbrecht's pale lips worked as if he was going to answer; but they uttered no sound: his hands fell by his side, and he stared into the chest.

"Why, master, what avails glaring into that empty box? The lad is not there. See here! Note the cunning of the young rogue; he hath taken out the bar, and——"

"GONE! GONE! GONE!"

"Gone! What is gone? Holy saints! he is planet-struck."

"STOP THIEF!" shrieked Ghysbrecht, and suddenly turned on his servant and collared him, and shook him with rage. "D'ye stand there, knave, and see your master robbed? Run! fly! A hundred crowns to him that finds it me again. No, no! 'tis in vain. Oh, fool! fool! to leave that in the same room with him. But none ever found the secret spring before. None ever would but he. It was to be. It is to be. Lost! lost!" and his years and infirmity now gained the better of his short-lived frenzy, and he sank on the chest muttering "Lost! lost!"

"What is lost, master?" asked the servant kindly.

"House and lands and good name," groaned Ghysbrecht, and wrung his hands feebly.

"WHAT?" cried the servant.

This emphatic word, and the tone of eager curiosity, struck on Ghysbrecht's ear and revived his natural cunning.

"I have lost the town records," stammered he, and he looked askant at the man like a fox caught near a hen-roost.

"Oh, is that all?"

"Is't not enough? What will the burghers say to me? What will the burgh do?" Then he suddenly burst out again, "A hundred crowns to him who shall recover them; all, mind, all that were in this box. If one be missing, I give nothing."

"'Tis a bargain, master: the hundred crowns are in my pouch. See ye not that where Gerard Eliassoen is, there are the pieces of sheepskin you rate so high?"

"That is true; that is true; good Dierich: good faithful Dierich. All, mind, all that were in the chest."

"Master, I will take the constables to Gerard's house, and seize him for the theft."

"The theft? ay! good; very good. It is theft. I forgot that. So, as he is a thief now, we will put him in the dungeons below, where the toads are and the rats. Dierich, that man must never see daylight again. 'Tis his own fault; he must be prying. Quick, quick! ere he has time to talk, you know, time to talk."

In less than half an hour Dierich Brower and four constables entered the hosier's house, and demanded young Gerard of the panic-stricken Catherine.

"Alas! what has he done now?" cried she; "that boy will break my heart."

"Nay, dame, but a trick of youth," said Dierich. "He hath but made off with certain skins of parchment, in a frolic doubtless; but the burgomaster is answerable to the burgh for their safe keeping, so he is in care about them: as for the youth, he will doubtless be quit for a reprimand."

This smooth speech completely imposed on Catherine;

but her daughter was more suspicious, and that suspicion was strengthened by the disproportionate anger and disappointment Dierich showed the moment he learned Gerard was not at home, had not been at home that night.

"Come away then," said he roughly. "We are wasting time." He added vehemently, "I'll find him if he is above ground." . . .

Gerard and Margaret went gaily to Sevenbergen in the first flush of recovered liberty and successful adventure. But these soon yielded to sadder thoughts. Gerard was an escaped prisoner, and liable to be retaken and perhaps punished; and therefore he and Margaret would have to part for a time. Moreover, he had conceived a hatred to his native place. Margaret wished him to leave the country for a while, but at the thought of his going to Italy her heart fainted. Gerard, on the contrary, was reconciled to leaving Margaret only by his desire to visit Italy, and his strong conviction that there he should earn money and reputation, and remove every obstacle to their marriage. He had already told her all that the demoiselle Van Eyck had said to him. He repeated it, and reminded Margaret that the gold pieces were only given him to go to Italy with. The journey was clearly for Gerard's interest. He was a craftsman and an artist, lost in this boorish place. In Italy they would know how to value him. On this ground above all the selfish girl gave her consent; but many tender tears came with it, and at that Gerard, young and loving as herself, cried bitterly with her, and often they asked one another what they had done, that so many different persons should be their enemies, and combine, as it seemed, to part them.

They sat hand in hand till midnight, now deploring their hard fate, now drawing bright and hopeful pictures of the future, in the midst of which Margaret's tears would suddenly flow, and then poor Gerard's eloquence would die away in a sigh.

The morning found them resigned to part, but neither had the courage to say when; and much I

doubt whether the hour of parting ever would have struck.

But about three in the afternoon, Giles, who had made a circuit of many miles to avoid suspicion, rode up to the door. They both ran out to him, eager with curiosity.

"Brother Gerard," cried he, in his tremendous tones, "Kate bids you run for your life. They charge you with theft; you have given them a handle. Think not to explain. Hope not for justice in Tergou. The parchments you took, they are but a blind. She hath seen your death in the men's eyes; a price is on your head. Fly! For Margaret's sake and all who love you, loiter not life away, but fly!"

It was a thunder-clap, and left two white faces looking at one another, and at the terrible messenger.

Then Giles, who had hitherto but uttered by rote what Catherine bade him, put in a word of his own.

"All the constables were at our house after you, and so was Dirk Brower. Kate is wise, Gerard. Best give ear to her rede, and fly."

"Oh, yes, Gerard," cried Margaret wildly. "Fly on the instant. Ah! those parchments; my mind misgave me: why did I let you take them?"

"Margaret, they are but a blind: Giles says so. No matter: the old caitiff shall never see them again; I will not go till I have hidden his treasure where he shall never find it." Gerard then, after thanking Giles warmly, bade him farewell, and told him to go back and tell Kate he was gone. "For I shall be gone ere you reach home," said he. He then shouted for Martin; and told him what had happened, and begged him to go a little way towards Tergou, and watch the road.

"Ay!" said Martin, "and if I see Dirk Brower, or any of his men, I will shoot an arrow into the oak-tree that is in our garden; and on that you must run into the forest hard by, and meet me at the weird hunter's spring. Then I will guide you through the wood."

Surprise thus provided against, Gerard breathed again. He went with Margaret, and while she watched the oak-tree tremblingly, fearing every moment to see

an arrow strike among the branches, Gerard dug a deep hole to bury the parchments in.

He threw them in, one by one. They were nearly all charters and records of the burgh; but one appeared to be a private deed between Floris Brandt, father of Peter, and Ghysbrecht.

"Why, this is as much yours as his," said Gerard. "I will read this."

"Oh, not now, Gerard, not now," cried Margaret. "Every moment you lose fills me with fear: and see, large drops of rain are beginning to fall, and the clouds lower."

Gerard yielded to this remonstrance; but he put the deed into his bosom, and threw the earth in over the others, and stamped it down. While thus employed there came a flash of lightning followed by a peal of distant thunder, and the rain came down heavily. Margaret and Gerard ran into the house, whither they were speedily followed by Martin.

"The road is clear," said he, "and a heavy storm coming on."

His words proved true. The thunder came nearer and nearer till it crashed overhead: the flashes followed one another close, like the strokes of a whip, and the rain fell in torrents. Margaret hid her face not to see the lightning. On this, Gerard put up the rough shutter and lighted a candle. The lovers consulted together, and Gerard blessed the storm that gave him a few hours more with Margaret. The sun set unperceived, and still the thunder pealed and the lightning flashed, and the rain poured. Supper was set, but Gerard and Margaret could not eat: the thought that this was the last time they should sup together choked them. The storm lulled a little. Peter retired to rest. But Gerard was to go at peep of day, and neither he nor Margaret could afford to lose an hour in sleep. Martin sat a while, too; for he was fitting a new string to his bow, a matter in which he was very nice.

V.

THE fiery old man left his mule in the hands of Jorian Ketel, and, with Dierich Brower and the others, entered the house.

The house was empty.

Not a creature to be seen, not even Peter. They went upstairs, and then suddenly one of the men gave a shout, and pointed through Peter's window, which was open. The others looked, and there, at some little distance, walking quietly across the fields with Margaret and Martin, was the man they sought. Ghysbrecht, with an exulting yell, descended the stairs and flung himself on his mule; and he and his men set off in hot pursuit.

Gerard, warned by recent peril, rose before daybreak and waked Martin. The old soldier was astonished. He thought Gerard had escaped by the window last night. Being consulted as to the best way for him to leave the country and elude pursuit, he said there was but one road safe. "I must guide you through the great forest to a bridle-road I know of. This will take you speedily to a hostelry, where they will lend you a swift horse; and then a day's gallop will take you out of Holland. But let us start ere the folk here quit their beds."

Peter's house was but a furlong and a half from the forest. They started, Martin with his bow and three arrows, for it was Thursday; Gerard with nothing but a stout oak staff Peter gave him for the journey.

Margaret pinned up her kirtle and farthingale, for the road was wet. Peter went as far as his garden hedge with them, and then, with more emotion than he often bestowed on passing events, gave the young man his blessing.

The sun was peeping above the horizon as they crossed the stony field and made for the wood. They had crossed about half, when Margaret, who kept nervously looking back every now and then, uttered a cry, and, following her instinct, began to run towards the wood, screaming with terror all the way.

Ghysbrecht and his men were in hot pursuit.

Resistance would have been madness. Martin and Gerard followed Margaret's example. The pursuers gained slightly on them; but Martin kept shouting, "Only win the wood; only win the wood!"

They had too good a start for the men on foot, and their hearts bounded with hope at Martin's words, for the great trees seemed now to stretch their branches like friendly arms towards them, and their leaves like a screen.

But an unforeseen danger attacked them. The fiery old burgomaster flung himself on his mule, and, spurring him to a gallop, he headed not his own men only, but the fugitives. His object was to cut them off. The old man came galloping in a semicircle, and got on the edge of the wood, right in front of Gerard; the others might escape for aught he cared.

Margaret shrieked, and tried to protect Gerard by clasping him; but he shook her off without ceremony.

Ghysbrecht in his ardour forgot that hunted animals turn on the hunter; and that two men can hate, and two can long to kill the thing they hate.

Instead of attempting to dodge him, as the burgomaster made sure he would, Gerard flew right at him, with a savage, exulting cry, and struck at him with all his heart and soul and strength. The oak staff came down on Ghysbrecht's face with a frightful crash, and laid him under his mule's tail beating the devil's tattoo with his heels, his face streaming, and his collar spattered with blood.

The next moment, the three were in the wood. The yell of dismay and vengeance that burst from Ghysbrecht's men at that terrible blow which felled their leader told the fugitives that it was now a race for life or death.

"Why run?" cried Gerard, panting. "You have your bow, and I have this," and he shook his bloody staff.

"Boy!" roared Martin; "the GALLOWS! Follow me," and he fled into the wood. Soon they heard a cry like a pack of hounds opening on sight of the game.

The men were in the wood and saw them flitting amongst the trees. Margaret moaned and panted as she ran; and Gerard clenched his teeth and grasped his staff. The next minute they came to a stiff hazel coppice. Martin dashed into it, and shouldered the young wood aside as if it were standing corn.

Ere they had gone fifty yards in it they came to four blind paths.

Martin took one. "Bend low," said he. And half-creeping they glided along. Presently their path was again intersected with other little tortuous paths. They took one of them. It seemed to lead back; but it soon took a turn, and, after a while, brought them to a thick pine grove, where the walking was good and hard. There were no paths here; and the young fir-trees were so thick, you could not see three yards before your nose.

When they had gone some way in this, Martin sat down; and, having learned in war to lose all impression of danger with the danger itself, took a piece of bread and a slice of ham out of his wallet, and began quietly to eat his breakfast.

The young ones looked at him with dismay. He replied to their looks.

"All Sevenbergen could not find you now; you will lose your purse, Gerard, long before you get to Italy; is that the way to carry a purse?"

Gerard looked, and there was a large triangular purse, entangled by its chains to the buckle and strap of his wallet.

"This is none of mine," said he. "What is in it, I wonder?" and he tried to detach it; but in passing through the coppice it had become inextricably entangled in his strap and buckle. "It seems loath to leave me," said Gerard, and he had to cut it loose with his knife. The purse, on examination, proved to be well provided with silver coins of all sizes, but its bloated appearance was greatly owing to a number of pieces of brown paper folded and doubled. A light burst on Gerard. "Why, it must be that old thief's; and see! stuffed with paper to deceive the world!"

The wonder was how the burgomaster's purse came on Gerard.

They hit at last upon the right solution. The purse must have been at Ghysbrecht's saddle-bow, and Gerard rushing at his enemy, had unconsciously torn it away, thus felling his enemy and robbing him, with a single gesture.

Gerard was delighted at this feat, but Margaret was uneasy.

"Throw it away, Gerard, or let Martin take it back. Already they call you a thief. I cannot bear it."

"Throw it away? give it him back? not a stiver! This is spoil lawfully won in battle from an enemy. Is it not, Martin?"

"Why, of course. Send him back the brown paper, an you will; but the purse or the coin—that were a sin."

"Oh, Gerard!" said Margaret, "you are going to a distant land. We need the good-will of Heaven. How can we hope for that if we take what is not ours?"

But Gerard saw it in a different light.

"It is Heaven that gives it me by a miracle, and I shall cherish it accordingly," said this pious youth. "Thus the favoured people spoiled the Egyptians, and were blessed."

"Take your own way," said Margaret humbly; "you are wiser than I am. You are my husband," added she, in a low murmuring voice; "is it for me to gainsay you?"

These humble words from Margaret, who, till that day, had held the whip-hand, rather surprised Martin for the moment. They recurred to him some time afterwards, and then they surprised him less.

Gerard kissed her tenderly in return for her wife-like docility, and they pursued their journey hand in hand, Martin leading the way, into the depths of the huge forest. The farther they went, the more absolutely secure from pursuit they felt. Indeed the townspeople never ventured so far as this into the trackless part of the forest.

Impetuous natures repent quickly. Gerard was no

sooner out of all danger than his conscience began to prick him.

"Martin, would I had not struck quite so hard."

"Whom? Oh! let that pass; he is cheap served."

"Martin, I saw his grey hairs as my stick fell on him. I doubt they will not from my sight this while."

Martin grunted with contempt. "Who spares a badger for his grey hairs? The greyer your enemy is, the older; and the older the craftier; and the craftier the better for a little killing."

"Killing? killing, Martin? Speak not of killing!" and Gerard shook all over.

"I am much mistook if you have not," said Martin cheerfully.

"Now Heaven forbid!"

"The old vagabond's skull cracked like a walnut, aha!"

"Heaven and the saints forbid it!"

"He rolled off his mule like a stone shot out of a cart. Said I to myself, 'There is one wiped out,' and the iron old soldier grinned ruthlessly.

Gerard fell on his knees and began to pray for his enemy's life.

"Oh, culpa mea! culpa mea!" cried Gerard, and smote upon his breast.

"Look there!" said Martin to Margaret scornfully, "*he is a priest at heart still*; and when he is not in ire, St. Paul, what a milksop!"

"Tush, Martin!" cried Margaret reproachfully: then she wreathed her arms round Gerard, and comforted him with the double magic of a woman's sense and a woman's voice.

"Sweetheart!" murmured she, "you forget: you went not a step out of the way to harm him, who hunted you to your death. You fled from him. He it was who spurred on you. Then did you strike; but in self-defence and a single blow, and with that which was in your hand. Malice had drawn knife, or struck again and again. How often have men been smitten with staves not one but many blows, yet no lives lost!

If then your enemy has fallen, it is through his own malice, not yours, and by the will of God."

"Bless you, Margaret; bless you for thinking so!"

"Yes; but, beloved one, if you have had the *misfortune* to kill that wicked man, the more need is there that you fly with haste from Holland. Oh, let us on."

"Nay, Margaret," said Gerard. "I fear not man's vengeance, thanks to Martin here and this thick wood: only Him I fear whose eye pierces the forest and reads the heart of man. If I but struck in self-defence, 'tis well; but if in hate, He may bid the avenger of blood follow me to Italy—to Italy? ay, to earth's remotest bounds."

"Hush!" said Martin peevishly. "I can't hear for your chat."

"What is it?"

"Do you hear nothing, Margaret; my ears are getting old."

Margaret listened, and presently she heard a tuneful sound, like a single stroke upon a deep ringing bell. She described it so to Martin.

"Nay, I heard it," said he.

"And so did I," said Gerard; "it was beautiful. Ah! there it is again. How sweetly it blends with the air. It is a long way off. It is before us, is it not?"

"No, no! the echoes of this wood confound the ear of a stranger. It comes from the pine grove."

"What! the one we passed?"

"The one we passed."

"Why, Martin, is this *anything*? You look pale."

"Wonderful!" said Martin, with a sickly sneer. "He asks me is it *anything*? Come, on, on! at any rate, let us reach a better place than this."

"A better place—for what?"

"To stand at bay, Gerard," said Martin gravely; "and die like soldiers, killing three for one."

"What's that sound?"

"IT IS THE AVENGER OF BLOOD."

"Oh, Martin! save him! Oh, Heaven be merciful! What new mysterious peril is this?"

"GIRL, IT'S A BLOODHOUND."

VI.

THE courage, like the talent, of common men, runs in a narrow groove. Take them but an inch out of that, and they are done. Martin's courage was perfect as far as it went. He had met and baffled many dangers in the course of his rude life, and these familiar dangers he could face with Spartan fortitude, almost with indifference; but he had never been hunted by a bloodhound, nor had he ever seen that brute's unerring instinct baffled by human cunning. Here then a sense of the supernatural combined with novelty to unsteel his heart. After going a few steps, he leaned on his bow, and energy and hope oozed out of him. Gerard, to whom the danger appeared slight in proportion as it was distant, urged him to flight.

"What avails it?" said Martin sadly; "if we get clear of the wood we shall die cheap; here, hard by, I know a place where we may die dear."

"Alas! good Martin," cried Gerard, "despair not so quickly; there must be some way to escape."

"Oh, Martin!" cried Margaret, "what if we were to part company? Gerard's life alone is forfeit. Is there no way to draw the pursuit on us twain and let him go safe?"

"Girl, you know not the bloodhound's nature. He is not on this man's track or that; he is on the track of blood. My life on't they have taken him to where Ghysbrecht fell, and from the dead man's blood to the man that shed it that cursed hound will lead them, though Gerard should run through an army or swim the Meuse." And again he leaned upon his bow, and his head sank.

The hound's mellow voice rang through the wood.

A cry more tuneable
Was never holla'd to, nor cheer'd with horn,
In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly.

Strange that things beautiful should be terrible and deadly. The eye of the boa-constrictor, while fascinating its prey, is lovely. No royal crown holds such a

jewel; it is a ruby with the emerald's green light playing ever upon it. Yet the deer that sees it loses all power of motion, and trembles, and awaits his death; and even so, to compare hearing with sight, this sweet and mellow sound seemed to fascinate Martin Wittenhaagen. He stood uncertain, bewildered, and unnerved. Gerard was little better now. Martin's last words had daunted him. He had struck an old man and shed his blood, and by means of that very blood, blood's four-footed avenger was on his track. Was not the finger of Heaven in this?

Whilst the men were thus benumbed, the woman's brain was all activity. The man she loved was in danger.

"Lend me your knife," said she to Martin. He gave it her.

"But 'twill be little use in your hands," said he.

Then Margaret did a sly thing. She stepped behind Gerard, and furtively drew the knife across her arm, and made it bleed freely; then stooping, smeared her hose and shoes; and still as the blood trickled she smeared them; but so adroitly that neither Gerard nor Martin saw. Then she seized the soldier's arm.

"Come, be a man!" she said, "and let this end. Take us to some thick place, where numbers will not avail our foes."

"I am going," said Martin sulkily. "Hurry avails not; we cannot shun the hound, and the place is hard by"; then turning to the left, he led the way, as men go to execution.

He soon brought them to a thick hazel coppice, like the one that had favoured their escape in the morning.

"There," said he, "this is but a furlong broad, but it will serve our turn."

"What are we to do?"

"Get through this, and wait on the other side; then as they come straggling through, shoot three, knock two on the head, and the rest will kill us."

"Is that all you can think of?" said Gerard.

"That is all."

"Then, Martin Wittenhaagen, I take the lead, for

you have lost your head. Come, can you obey so young a man as I am?"

"Oh, yes, Martin," cried Margaret, "do not gainsay Gerard. He is wiser than his years." X.

Martin yielded a sullen assent.

"Do then as you see me do," said Gerard, and drawing his huge knife, he cut at every step a hazel shoot or two close by the ground, and turning round twisted them breast-high behind him among the standing shoots. Martin did the same, but with a dogged hopeless air. When they had thus painfully travelled through the greater part of the coppice, the blood-hound's deep bay came nearer and nearer, less and less musical, louder and sterner.

Margaret trembled.

Martin went down on his stomach and listened.

"I hear a horse's feet."

"No," said Gerard; "I doubt it is a mule's. That cursed Ghysbrecht is still alive: none other would follow me up so bitterly."

"Never strike your enemy but to slay him," said Martin gloomily.

"I'll hit harder this time, if Heaven gives me the chance," said Gerard.

At last they worked through the coppice, and there was an open wood. The trees were large, but far apart, and no escape possible that way.

And now with the hound's bay mingled a score of voices, whooping and hallooing.

"The whole village is out after us," said Martin.

"I care not," said Gerard. "Listen, Martin. I have made the track smooth to the dog, but rough to the men, that we may deal with them apart. Thus the hound will gain on the men, and as soon as he comes out of the coppice we must kill him."

"The hound? There are more than one."

"I hear but one."

"Ay! but one speaks, the others run mute; but let the leading hound lose the scent, then another shall give tongue. There will be two dogs, at least, or devils in dog's hides."

"Then we must kill two instead of one. The moment they are dead, into the coppice again, and go right back."

"That is a good thought, Gerard," said Martin, plucking up heart.

"Hush! the men are in the wood."

Gerard now gave his orders in a whisper.

"Stand you with your bow by the side of the coppice—there, in the ditch. I will go but a few yards to yon oak-tree, and hide behind it; the dogs will follow me, and, as they come out, shoot as many as you can, the rest will I brain as they come round the tree."

Martin's eye flashed. They took up their places.

The whooping and hallooing came closer and closer, and soon even the rustling of the young wood was heard, and every now and then the unerring blood-hound gave a single bay.

It was terrible—the branches rustling nearer and nearer, and the inevitable struggle for life and death coming on minute by minute, and that death-knell leading it! A trembling hand was laid on Gerard's shoulder. It made him start violently, strung up as he was.

"Martin says if we are forced to part company, make for that high ash-tree we came in by."

"Yes! yes! yes! but go back, for Heaven's sake! don't come here, all out in the open!"

She ran back towards Martin; but ere she could get to him, suddenly a huge dog burst out of the coppice, and stood erect a moment. Margaret cowered with fear, but he never noticed her. Scent was to him what sight is to us. He lowered his nose an instant, and the next moment, with an awful yell, sprang straight at Gerard's tree, and rolled head-over-heels dead as a stone, literally spitted by an arrow from the bow that twanged beside the coppice in Martin's hand. That same moment out came another hound and smelt his dead comrade. Gerard rushed out at him; but ere he could use his cudgel, a streak of white lightning seemed to strike the hound, and he grovelled in the dust,

wounded desperately, but not killed, and howling piteously.

Gerard had not time to despatch him; the coppice rustled too near: it seemed alive. Pointing wildly to Martin to go back, Gerard ran a few yards to the right, then crept cautiously into the thick coppice just as three men burst out. These had headed their comrades considerably: the rest were following at various distances. Gerard crawled back almost on all-fours. Instinct taught Martin and Margaret to do the same upon their line of retreat. Thus, within the distance of a few yards, the pursuers and pursued were passing one another upon opposite tracks.

A loud cry announced the discovery of the dead and the wounded hound. Then followed a babble of voices, still swelling as fresh pursuers reached the spot. The hunters, as usual on a surprise, were wasting time, and the hunted ones were making the most of it.

"I hear no more hounds," whispered Martin to Margaret, and he was himself again.

It was Margaret's turn to tremble and despair.

"Oh, why did we part with Gerard? They will kill my Gerard, and I not near him."

"Nay, nay! the head to catch him is not on their shoulders. You bade him meet us at the ash-tree?"

"And so I did. Bless you, Martin, for thinking of that. To the ash-tree!"

"Ay! but with less noise."

They were now nearly at the edge of the coppice, when suddenly they heard whooping and hallooing behind them. The men had satisfied themselves the fugitives were in the coppice, and were beating back.

"No matter," whispered Martin to his trembling companion. "We shall have time to win clear and slip out of sight by hard running. Ah!"

He stooped suddenly; for just as he was going to burst out of the brushwood, his eye caught a figure keeping sentinel. It was Ghysbrecht Van Swieten seated on his mule; a bloody bandage was across his nose, the bridge of which was broken; but over this his eyes peered keenly, and it was plain by their expres-

sion he had heard the fugitives rustle, and was looking out for them. Martin muttered a terrible oath, and cautiously strung his bow, then with equal caution fitted his last arrow to the string. Margaret put her hands to her face, but said nothing. She saw this man must die or Gerard. After the first impulse she peered through her fingers, her heart panting to her throat.

The bow was raised, and the deadly arrow steadily drawn to its head, when at that moment an active figure leaped on Ghysbrecht from behind so swiftly it was like a hawk swooping on a pigeon. A kerchief went over the burgomaster, in a turn of the hand his head was muffled in it, and he was whirled from his seat and fell heavily upon the ground, where he lay groaning with terror; and Gerard jumped down after him.

"Hist, Martin! Martin!"

Martin and Margaret came out, the former open-mouthed, crying, "Now fly! fly! while they are all in the thicket. We are saved!"

At this crisis, when safety seemed at hand, as fate would have it, Margaret, who had borne up so bravely till now, began to succumb, partly from loss of blood.

"Oh, my beloved, fly!" she gasped. "Leave me, for I am faint."

"No! no!" cried Gerard. "Death together, or safety. Ah! the mule: mount her, you, and I'll run by your side."

In a moment Martin was on Ghysbrecht's mule, and Gerard raised the fainting girl in his arms and placed her on the saddle, and relieved Martin of his bow.

"Help! treason! murder! murder!" shrieked Ghysbrecht, suddenly rising on his hams.

"Silence, cur," roared Gerard, and trode him down again by the throat as men crush an adder.

"Now, have you got her firm? Then fly! for our lives! for our lives!"

But even as the mule, urged suddenly by Martin's heel, scattered the flints with his hind hoofs ere he got into a canter, and even as Gerard withdrew his foot

from Ghysbrecht's throat to run, Dierich Brower and his five men, who had come back for orders, and heard the burgomaster's cries, burst roaring out of the coppice on them.

VII.

SPEECH is the familiar vent of human thoughts; but there are emotions so simple and overpowering, that they rush out not in words, but in eloquent sounds. At such moments man seems to lose his characteristics, and to be merely one of the higher animals; for these, when greatly agitated, ejaculate, though they cannot speak.

There was something terrible, and truly animal, both in the roar of triumph with which the pursuers burst out of the thicket on our fugitives, and the sharp cry of terror with which these latter darted away. The pursuers' hands clutched the empty air, scarce two feet behind them, as they fled for life. Confused for a moment, like lions that miss their spring, Dierich and his men let Gerard and the mule put ten yards between them. Then they flew after with uplifted weapons. They were sure of catching them; for this was not the first time the parties had measured speed. In the open ground they had gained visibly on the three this morning, and now, at last, it was a fair race again, to be settled by speed alone. A hundred yards were covered in no time. Yet still there remained these ten yards between the pursuers and the pursued.

This increase of speed since the morning puzzled Dierich Brower. The reason was this. When three run in company, the pace is that of the slowest of the three. From Peter's house to the edge of the forest Gerard ran Margaret's pace; but now he ran his own; for the mule was fleet, and could have left them all far behind. Moreover, youth and chaste living began to tell. Daylight grew imperceptibly between the hunted ones and the hunters. Then Dierich made a desperate effort, and gained two yards: but in a few seconds

Gerard had stolen them quietly back. The pursuers began to curse.

Martin heard, and his face lighted up. "Courage, Gerard! courage, brave lad! they are straggling."

It was so. Dierich was now headed by one of his men, and another dropped into the rear altogether.

They came to a rising ground, not sharp, but long; and here youth, and grit, and sober living told more than ever.

Ere he reached the top, Dierich's forty years weighed him down like forty bullets. "Our cake is dough," he gasped. "Take him dead, if you can't alive;" and he left running, and followed at a foot's pace. Jorian Ketel tailed off next; and then another, and so, one by one, Gerard ran them all to a standstill, except one who kept on staunch as a bloodhound, though losing ground every minute. His name, if I am not mistaken, was Eric Wouverman. Followed by him, they came to a rise in the wood, shorter, but much steeper than the last.

"Hand on mane!" cried Martin.

Gerard obeyed, and the mule helped him up the hill faster even than he was running before.

At the sight of this manoeuvre Dierich's man lost heart, and, being now full eighty yards behind Gerard, and rather more than that in advance of his nearest comrade, he pulled up short, and, in obedience to Dierich's order, took down his crossbow, levelled it deliberately, and just as the trio were sinking out of sight over the crest of the hill, sent the bolt whizzing among them.

There was a cry of dismay; and, next moment, as if a thunderbolt had fallen on them, they were all lying on the ground, mule and all.

The effect was so sudden and magical, that the shooter himself was stupefied for an instant. Then he hailed his companions to join him in effecting the capture, and himself set off up the hill; but, ere he had got half way, up rose the figure of Martin Wittenhaagen with a bent bow in his hand. Eric Wouverman no sooner saw him in this attitude, than he darted behind a tree, and made himself as small as possible.

Martin's skill with that weapon was well known, and the slain dog was a keen reminder of it.

Wouwerman peered round the bark cautiously: there was the arrow's point still aimed at him. He saw it shine. He dared not move from his shelter.

When he had been at peep-bo some minutes, his companions came up in great force.

Then, with a scornful laugh, Martin vanished, and presently was heard to ride off on the mule.

All the men ran up together. The high ground commanded a view of a narrow but almost interminable glade.

They saw Gerard and Margaret running along at a prodigious distance; they looked like gnats; and Martin galloping after them *ventre à terre*.

The hunters were outwitted as well as outrun. A few words will explain Martin's conduct. We arrive at causes by noting coincidences; yet, now and then, coincidences are deceitful. As we have all seen a hare tumble over a briar just as the gun went off, and so raise expectations, then dash them to earth by scudding away untouched, so the burgomaster's mule put her foot in a rabbit-hole at or about the time the crossbow bolt whizzed innocuous over her head: she fell and threw both her riders. Gerard caught Margaret, but was carried down by her weight and impetus; and, behold, the soil was strewn with *dramatis personæ*.

The docile mule was up again directly, and stood trembling. Martin was next, and looking round saw there was but one in pursuit; on this he made the young lovers fly on foot, while he checked the enemy as I have recorded.

He now galloped after his companions, and when after a long race he caught them, he instantly put Gerard and Margaret on the mule, and ran by their side till his breath failed, then took his turn to ride, and so in rotation. Thus the runner was always fresh, and long ere they relaxed their speed all sound and trace of them was hopelessly lost to Dierich and his men. These latter went crestfallen back to look after their chief and their winged bloodhound.

VIII.

LIFE and liberty, while safe, are little thought of: for why? they are matters of course. Endangered, they are rated at their real value. In this, too, they are like sunshine, whose beauty men notice not at noon when it is greatest, but towards evening when it lies in flakes of topaz under shady elms. Yet it is feebler then; but gloom lies beside it, and contrast reveals its fire. Thus Gerard and Margaret, though they started at every leaf that rustled louder than its fellows, glowed all over with joy and thankfulness as they glided among the friendly trees in safety and deep tranquil silence, baying dogs and brutal voices yet ringing in their mind's ears.

But presently Gerard found stains of blood on Margaret's ankles.

"Martin! Martin! help! they have wounded her: the crossbow!"

"No, no!" said Margaret, smiling to reassure him; "I am not wounded, nor hurt at all."

"But what is it, then, in Heaven's name?" cried Gerard, in great agitation.

"Scold me not, then!" and Margaret blushed.

"Did I ever scold you?"

"No, dear Gerard. Well, then, Martin said it was blood those cruel dogs followed; so I thought if I could but have a little blood on my shoon, the dogs would follow me instead, and let my Gerard wend free. So I scratched my arm with Martin's knife—forgive me! Whose else could I take? Yours, Gerard? Ah, no. You forgive me?" said she beseechingly, and lovingly and fawningly, all in one.

"Let me see this scratch first," said Gerard, choking with emotion. "There, I thought so. A scratch? I call it a cut—a deep, terrible, cruel cut."

Gerard shuddered at sight of it.

"She might have done it with her bodkin," said the soldier. "Milk-sop! that sickens at sight of a scratch and a little blood."

"No, no. I could look on a sea of blood, but not on hers. Oh, Margaret! how could you be so cruel?"

Margaret smiled with love ineffable. "Foolish Gerard," murmured she, "to make so much of nothing." And she flung the guilty arm round his neck. "As if I would not give all the blood in my heart for you, let alone a few drops from my arm." And with this, under the sense of his recent danger, she wept on his neck for pity and love; and he wept with her.

"And I must part from her," he sobbed; "we two that love so dear—one must be in Holland, one in Italy. Ah me! ah me! ah me!"

At this Margaret wept afresh, but patiently and silently. Instinct is never off its guard, and with her unselfishness was an instinct. To utter her present thoughts would be to add to Gerard's misery at parting, so she wept in silence.

Suddenly they emerged upon a beaten path, and Martin stopped.

"This is the bridle-road I spoke of," said he, hanging his head, "and there away lies the hostelry."

Margaret and Gerard cast a scared look at one another.

"Come a step with me, Martin," whispered Gerard. When he had drawn him aside, he said to him in a broken voice, "Good Martin, watch over her for me! She is my wife; yet I leave her. See, Martin! here is gold—it was for my journey; it is no use my asking her to take it, she would not; but you will for her, will you not? Oh, Heaven! and is this all I can do for her? Money? But poverty is a curse. You will not let her want for anything, dear Martin? The burgomaster's silver is enough for me."

"Thou art a good lad, Gerard. Neither want nor harm shall come to her. I care more for her little finger than for all the world; and were she nought to me, even for thy sake would I be a father to her. Go with a stout heart, and God be with thee going and coming." And the rough soldier wrung Gerard's hand, and turned his head away, with unwonted feeling.

After a moment's silence he was for going back to Margaret, but Gerard stopped him. "No, good Martin; prithee, stay here behind this thicket, and turn your head away from us, while I—oh, Martin! Martin!"

By this means Gerard escaped a witness of his anguish at leaving her he loved, and Martin escaped a piteous sight. He did not see the poor young things kneel and renew before Heaven those holy vows cruel men had interrupted. He did not see them cling together like one, and then try to part, and fail, and return to one another, and cling again, like drowning, despairing creatures. But he heard Gerard sob, and sob, and Margaret moan.

At last there was a hoarse cry, and feet pattered on the hard road.

He started up, and there was Gerard running wildly, with both hands clasped above his head, in prayer, and Margaret tottering back towards him with palms extended piteously, as if for help, and ashy cheek and eyes fixed on vacancy.

He caught her in his arms, and spoke words of comfort to her; but her mind could not take them in; only at the sound of his voice she moaned and held him tight, and trembled violently.

He got her on the mule, and put his arm round her, and so, supporting her frame, which, from being strung like a bow, had now turned all relaxed and powerless, he took her slowly and sadly home.

She did not shed one tear, nor speak one word.

At the edge of the wood he took her off the mule, and bade her go across to her father's house. She did as she was bid.

Martin to Rotterdam. Sevenbergen was too hot for him.

Gerard, severed from her he loved, went like one in a dream. He hired a horse and a guide at the little hostelry, and rode swiftly towards the German frontier. But all was mechanical; his senses felt blunted; trees and houses and men moved by him like objects seen

through a veil. His companion spoke to him twice, but he did not answer. Only once he cried out savagely, "Shall we never be out of this hateful country?"

After many hours' riding they came to the brow of a steep hill; a small brook ran at the bottom.

"Halt!" cried the guide, and pointed across the valley. "Here is Germany."

"Where?"

"On t'other side of the bourn. No need to ride down the hill, I trow."

Gerard dismounted without a word, and took the burgomaster's purse from his girdle: while he opened it, "You will soon be out of this hateful country," said his guide, half sulkily; "mayhap the one you are going to will like you no better; any way, though it be a church you have robbed, they cannot take you, once across that bourn."

These words at another time would have earned the speaker an admonition or a cuff. They fell on Gerard now like idle air. He paid the lad in silence, and descended the hill alone. The brook was silvery; it ran murmuring over little pebbles, that glittered, varnished by the clear water; he sat down and looked stupidly at them. Then he drank of the brook; then he laved his hot feet and hands in it; it was very cold: it waked him. He rose, and taking a run, leaped across it into Germany. Even as he touched the strange land he turned suddenly and looked back. "Farewell, ungrateful country!" he cried. "But for *her* it would cost me nought to leave you for ever, and all my kith and kin, and—the mother that bore me, and—my playmates, and my little native town. Farewell, fatherland—welcome the wide world! omne so—lum for—ti p—p—at—ri—a." And with these brave words in his mouth he drooped suddenly with arms and legs all weak, and sat down and sobbed bitterly upon the foreign soil.

When the young exile had sat a while bowed down, he rose and dashed the tears from his eyes like a man;

and not casting a single glance more behind him, to weaken his heart, stepped out into the wide world.

His love and heavy sorrow left no room in him for vulgar misgivings. Compared with rending himself from Margaret, it seemed a small thing to go on foot to Italy in that rude age.

All nations meet in a convent. So, thanks to his good friends the monks, and his own thirst of knowledge, he could speak most of the languages needed on that long road. He said to himself, "I will soon be at Rome; the sooner the better now."

After walking a good league, he came to a place where four ways met. Being country roads, and serpentine, they had puzzled many an inexperienced neighbour passing from village to village. Gerard took out a little dial Peter had given him, and set it in the autumn sun, and by this compass steered unhesitatingly for Rome—inexperienced as a young swallow flying south; but unlike the swallow, wandering south alone.

IX.

EIGHT leagues he walked that day, and in the afternoon came upon a huge building with an enormous arched gateway and a postern by its side.

"A monastery!" cried he joyfully; "I go no further lest I fare worse." He applied at the postern, and on stating whence he came and whither bound, was instantly admitted and directed to the guest-chamber, a large and lofty room, where travellers were fed and lodged gratis by the charity of the monastic orders. Soon the bell tinkled for vespers, and Gerard entered the church of the convent, and from his place heard a service sung so exquisitely, it seemed the choir of heaven. But one thing was wanting, Margaret was not there to hear it with him, and this made him sigh bitterly in mid rapture. At supper, plain but wholesome and abundant food, and good beer, brewed in the convent, were set before him and his fellows, and at an early hour they were ushered into a large dormi-

tory, and the number being moderate, had each a truckle bed, and for covering, sheepskins dressed with the fleece on; but previously to this a monk, struck by his youth and beauty, questioned him, and soon drew out his projects and his heart. When he was found to be convent bred, and going alone to Rome, he became a personage, and in the morning they showed him over the convent and made him stay and dine in the refectory. They also pricked him a route on a slip of parchment, and the prior gave him a silver guilder to help him on the road, and advised him to join the first honest company he should fall in with, "and not face alone the manifold perils of the way."

"Perils?" said Gerard to himself.

That evening he came to a small straggling town where was one inn; it had no sign; but being now better versed in the customs of the country, he detected it at once by the coats of arms on its walls. These belonged to the distinguished visitors who had slept in it at different epochs since its foundation, and left these customary tokens of their patronage. At present it looked more like a mausoleum than a hotel. Nothing moved nor sounded either in it or about it. Gerard hammered on the great oak door: no answer. He hallooed: no reply. After a while he hallooed louder, and at last a little round window, or rather hole in the wall, opened, a man's head protruded cautiously, like a tortoise's from its shell, and eyed Gerard stolidly, but never uttered a syllable.

"Is this an inn?" asked Gerard, with a covert sneer.

The head seemed to fall into a brown study; eventually it nodded, but lazily.

"Can I have entertainment here?"

Again the head pondered and ended by nodding, but sullenly, and seemed a skull overburdened with catch-penny interrogatories.

"How am I to get within, an't please you?"

At this the head popped in, as if the last question had shot it; and a hand popped out, pointed round the corner of the building, and slammed the window.

Gerard followed the indication, and after some

research discovered that the fortification had one vulnerable part, a small low door on its flank. As for the main entrance, that was used to keep out thieves and customers, except once or twice in a year when they entered together, *i.e.*, when some duke or count arrived in pomp with his train of gaudy ruffians.

Gerard, having penetrated the outer fort, soon found his way to the stove (as the public room was called from the principal article in it), and sat down near the oven, in which were only a few live embers that diffused a mild and grateful heat.

After waiting patiently a long time, he asked a grim old fellow with a long white beard, who stalked solemnly in, and turned the hour-glass, and then was stalking out, when supper would be. The grisly Gany-mede counted the guests on his fingers—"When I see thrice as many here as now." Gerard groaned.

The grisly tyrant resented the rebellious sound. "Inns are not built for one," said he; "if you can't wait for the rest, look out for another lodging."

Gerard sighed.

At this the greybeard frowned.

After a while company trickled steadily in, till full eighty persons of various conditions were congregated, and to our novice the place became a chamber of horrors; for here the mothers got together and compared ringworms, and the men scraped the mud off their shoes with their knives, and left it on the floor, and combed their long hair out, and made their toilet, consisting generally of a dry rub. Water, however, was brought in ewers. Gerard pounced on one of these, but at sight of the liquid contents lost his temper and said to the waiter, "Wash you first your water, and then a man may wash his hands withal."

"An' it likes you not, seek another inn!"

Gerard said nothing, but went quietly and courteously, besought an old traveller to tell him how far it was to the next inn.

"About four leagues."

Then Gerard appreciated the grim pleasantry of the unbending sire.

That worthy now returned with an armful of wood, and counting the travellers, put on a log for every six, by which act of raw justice the hotter the room the more heat he added. Poor Gerard noticed this little flaw in the ancient man's logic, but carefully suppressed every symptom of intelligence, lest his feet should have to carry his brains four leagues farther that night.

When perspiration and suffocation were far advanced, they brought in the table-cloths; but oh, so brown, so dirty, and so coarse; they seemed like sacks that had been worn out in agriculture and come down to this, or like shreds from the mainsail of some worn-out ship. The Hollander, who had never seen such linen even in nightmare, uttered a faint cry.

"What is to do?" inquired a traveller. Gerard pointed ruefully to the dirty sackcloth. The other looked at it with lack-lustre eye, and comprehended nought.

A Burgundian soldier with his arbalest at his back came peeping over Gerard's shoulder, and seeing what was amiss, laughed so loud that the room rang again, then slapped him on the back and cried, "Courage! le diable est mort."

Gerard stared: he doubted alike the good tidings and their relevancy; but the tones were so hearty and the arbalestrier's face, notwithstanding a formidable beard, was so gay and genial that he smiled, and after a pause said dryly, "Il a bien fait: avec l'eau et linge du pays on allait le noircir à ne se reconnaître plus."

"Tiens, tiens!" cried the soldier, "v'la qui parle le Français, peu s'en faut," and he seated himself by Gerard, and in a moment was talking volubly of war, women, and pillage, interlarding his discourse with curious oaths, at which Gerard drew away from him more or less.

Presently in came the grisly servant, and counted them all on his fingers superciliously, like Abraham telling sheep; then went out again, and returned with a deal trencher and deal spoon to each.

Then there was an interval. Then he brought them a long mug apiece made of glass, and frowned. By-

and-by he stalked gloomily in with a hunch of bread apiece, and exit with an injured air. Expectation thus raised, the guests sat for nearly an hour balancing the wooden spoons, and with their own knives whittling the bread. Eventually, when hope was extinct, patience worn out, and hunger exhausted, a huge vessel was brought in with pomp, the lid was removed, a cloud of steam rolled forth, and behold some thin broth with square pieces of bread floating. [This, though not agreeable to the mind, served to distend the body. Slices of Strasbourg ham followed, and pieces of salt fish, both so highly salted that Gerard could hardly swallow a mouthful. Then came a kind of gruel, and when the repast had lasted an hour and more, some hashed meat highly peppered; and the French and Dutch being now full to the brim with the above dainties, and the draughts of beer the salt and spiced meats had provoked, in came roasted kids, most excellent, and carp and trout fresh from the stream. Gerard made an effort and looked angrily at them, but "could no more," as the poets say. The Burgundian swore by the liver and spike-staff of the good centurion, the natives had outwitted him. Then turning to Gerard he said, "Courage, l'ami, le diable est mort," as loudly as before, but not with the same tone of conviction. The canny natives had kept an internal corner for contingencies, and polished the kids' very bones.

The feast ended with a dish of raw animalcula in a wicker cage. A cheese had been surrounded with little twigs and strings; then a hole made in it and a little sour wine poured in. This speedily bred a small but numerous vermin. When the cheese was so rotten with them that only the twigs and string kept it from tumbling to pieces and walking off quadrivious, it came to table. By a malicious caprice of fate, cage and menagerie were put down right under the Dutchman's organ of self-torture. He recoiled with a loud ejaculation, and hung to the bench by the calves of his legs.

"What is the matter?" said a traveller disdainfully. "Does the good cheese scare ye? Then put it hither, in the name of all the saints!"

"Cheese!" cried Gerard, "I see none. These nauseous reptiles have made away with every bit of it."

"Well," replied another, "it is not gone far. By eating of the mites we eat the cheese to boot."

"Nay, not so," said Gerard. "These reptiles are made like us, and digest their food and turn it to foul flesh even as we do ours to sweet; as well might you think to chew grass by eating of grass-fed beeves, as to eat cheese by swallowing these uncleanly insects."

Gerard raised his voice in uttering this, and the company received the paradox in dead silence, and with a distrustful air, like any other stranger, during which the Burgundian, who understood German but imperfectly, made Gerard Gallicise the discussion. He patted his interpreter on the back. "C'est bien mon gars : plus fin que toi n'est pas bête," and administered his formula of encouragement; and Gerard edged away from him; for next to ugly sights and ill odours, the poor wretch disliked profaneness.

Meantime, though shaken in argument, the raw reptiles were duly eaten and relished by the company, and served to provoke thirst, a principal aim of all the solids in that part of Germany. So now the company drank *garausses* all round, and their tongues were unloosed, and oh, the Babel! But above the fierce clamour rose at intervals, like some hero's war-cry in battle, the trumpet-like voice of the Burgundian soldier shouting lustily, "Courage, camarades, le diable est mort!"

Entered grisly Ganymede holding in his hand a wooden dish with circles and semicircles marked on it in chalk. He put it down on the table and stood silent, sad, and sombre, as Charon by Styx waiting for his boatload of souls. Then pouches and purses were rummaged, and each threw a coin into the dish. Gerard timidly observed that he had drunk next to no beer, and inquired how much less he was to pay than the others.

"What mean you?" said Ganymede roughly.

"Whose fault is it you have not drunken? Are all to suffer because one chooses to be a milksop? You will pay no more than the rest, and no less."

Gerard was abashed.

"Courage, petit, le diable est mort," hiccoughed the soldier, and flung Ganymede a coin.

"You are as bad as he is," said the old man peevishly; "you are paying too much"; and the tyrannical old Aristides returned him some coin out of the trencher with a most reproachful countenance. And now the man whom Gerard had confuted an hour and a half ago awoke from a brown study, in which he had been ever since, and came to him and said, "Yes; but the honey is none the worse for passing through the bees' bellies."

Gerard stared. The answer had been so long on the road he hadn't an idea what it was an answer to. Seeing him dumbfounded, the other concluded him confuted, and withdrew calmed.

The bedrooms were upstairs, dungeons with not a scrap of furniture except the bed, and a male servant settled inexorably who should sleep with whom. Neither money nor prayers would get a man a bed to himself here; custom forbade it sternly. You might as well have asked to monopolise a see-saw. They assigned to Gerard a man with a great black beard. He was an honest fellow enough, but not perfect; he would *not* go to bed, and *would* sit on the edge of it telling the wretched Gerard by force, and at length, the events of the day, and alternately laughing and crying at the same circumstances, which were not in the smallest degree pathetic or humorous, but only dead trivial. At last Gerard put his fingers in his ears, and lying down in his clothes, for the sheets were too dirty for him to undress, contrived to sleep. But in an hour or two he awoke cold, and found that his drunken companion had got all the feather bed; so mighty is instinct. They lay between two beds; the lower one hard and made of straw, the upper soft and filled with feathers light as down. Gerard pulled at it, but the experienced drunkard held it fast mechanically. Gerard

tried to twitch it away by surprise, but instinct was too many for him. On this he got out of bed, and kneeling down on his bedfellow's unguarded side, easily whipped the prize away and rolled with it under the bed, and there lay on one edge of it, and curled the rest round his shoulders. Before he slept he often heard something grumbling and growling above him, which was some little satisfaction. Thus Instinct was outwitted, and victorious Reason lay chuckling on feathers, and not quite choked with dust.

At peep of day Gerard rose, flung the feather bed upon his snoring companion, and went in search of milk and air.

A cheerful voice hailed him in French: "What ho! you are up with the sun, comrade."

"He rises betimes that lies in a dog's lair," answered Gerard crossly.

"Courage, l'ami! le diable est mort," was the instant reply. The soldier then told him his name was Denys, and he was passing from Flushing in Zealand to the Duke's French dominions; a change the more agreeable to him, as he should revisit his native place, and a host of pretty girls who had wept at his departure, and should hear French spoken again. "And who are you, and whither bound?"

"My name is Gerard, and I am going to Rome," said the more reserved Hollander, and in a way that invited no further confidences.

"All the better; we will go together as far as Burgundy."

"That is not my road."

"All roads take to Rome."

"Ay, but the shortest road thither is my way."

"Well, then, it is I who must go out of my way a step for the sake of good company, for thy face likes me, and thou speakest French, or nearly."

"There go two words to that bargain," said Gerard coldly. "I steer by proverbs too. They do put old heads on young men's shoulders. 'Bon loup mauvais compagnon, dit le brebis;' and a soldier, they say, is near akin to a wolf."

"They lie," said Denys; "besides, if he is, 'les loups ne se mangent pas entre eux.'"

"Ay, but, sir soldier, I am not a wolf; and thou knowest, 'à bien petite occasion se saisit le loup du mouton.'"

"Let us drop wolves and sheep, being men; my meaning is, that a good soldier never pillages—a comrade. Come, young man, too much suspicion becomes not your years. They who travel should learn to read faces; methinks you might see lealty in mine sith I have seen it in yourn. Is it yon fat purse at your girdle you fear for?" (Gerard turned pale.) "Look hither!" and he undid his belt, and poured out of it a double handful of gold pieces, then returned them to their hiding-place. "There is a hostage for you," said he; "carry you that, and let us be comrades," and handed him his belt, gold and all.

Gerard stared. "If I am over prudent, you have not enow." But he flushed and looked pleased at the other's trust in him.

"Bah! I can read faces; and so must you, or you'll never take your four bones safe to Rome."

"Soldier, you would find me a dull companion, for my heart is very heavy," said Gerard, yielding.

"I'll cheer you, mon gars."

"I think you would," said Gerard, sweetly; "and sore need have I of a kindly voice in mine ear this day."

"Oh! no soul is sad alongside me. I lift up their poor little hearts with my consigne: 'Courage, tout le monde, le diable est mort.' Ha! ha!"

"So be it, then," said Gerard. "But take back your belt, for I could never trust by halves. We will go together as far as Rhine, and God go with us both!"

"Amen!" said Denys, and lifted his cap. "En avant!"

The pair trudged manfully on, and Denys enlivened the weary way. He chatted about battles and sieges, and things which were new to Gerard; and he was

one of those who *make* little incidents wherever they go. He passed nobody without addressing him. "They don't understand it, but it wakes them up," said he. But, whenever they fell in with a monk or priest, he pulled a long face, and sought the reverend father's blessing, and fearlessly poured out on him floods of German words in such order as not to produce a single German sentence. He doffed his cap to every woman, high or low, he caught sight of, and with eagle eye discerned her best feature, and complimented her on it in his native tongue, well adapted to such matters: and, at each carrion crow or magpie, down came his crossbow, and he would go a furlong off the road to circumvent it; and indeed he did shoot one old crow with laudable neatness and despatch, and carried it to the nearest hen-roost, and there slipped in and set it upon a nest. "The good-wife will say, 'Alack, here is Beelzebub ahatching of my eggs.'"

"No, you forget, he is dead," objected Gerard.

"So he is, so he is. But she doesn't know that, not having the luck to be acquainted with me, who carry the good news from city to city, uplifting men's hearts."

Such was Denys in time of peace.

Our travellers towards nightfall reached a village; it was a very small one, but contained a place of entertainment. They searched for it, and found a small house with barn and stables. In the former was the everlasting stove, and the clothes drying round it on lines, and a traveller or two sitting morose. Gerard asked for supper.

"Supper? We have no time to cook for travellers; we only provide lodging, good lodging for man and beast. You can have some beer."

"Madman, who, born in Holland, sought other lands!" snorted Gerard in Dutch. The landlady started.

"What gibberish is that?" asked she, and crossed herself with looks of superstitious alarm. "You can buy what you like in the village, and cook it in our oven; but, prithee, mutter no charms nor sorceries

here, good man; don't ye now, it do make my flesh creep so."

They scoured the village for food, and ended by supping on roasted eggs and brown bread.

At a very early hour their chambermaid came for them. It was a rosy-cheeked old fellow with a lanthorn.

They followed him. He led them across a dirty farm-yard, where they had much ado to pick their steps, and brought them into a cow-house. There, on each side of every cow, was laid a little clean straw, and a tied bundle of ditto for a pillow. The old man looked down on this his work with paternal pride. Not so Gerard. "What, do you set Christian men to lie among cattle?"

"Well, it is hard upon the poor beasts. They have scarce room to turn."

"Oh! what, it is not hard on us then?"

"Where is the hardship? I have lain among them all my life. Look at me! I am four score, and never had a headache in all my born days—all along of lying among the kye. Bless your silly head, kine's breath is ten times sweeter to drink nor Christians'. You try it!" and he slammed the bedroom door.

One day about noon they reached a town of some pretensions, and Gerard was glad, for he wanted to buy a pair of shoes; his own were quite worn out. They soon found a shop that displayed a goodly array, and made up to it, and would have entered it, but the shopkeeper sat on the door-step taking a nap, and was so fat as to block up the narrow doorway; the very light could hardly struggle past his "too, too solid flesh," much less a carnal customer.

My fair readers, accustomed, when they go shopping, to be met half way with nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles, and waved into a seat, while almost at the same instant an eager shopman flings himself half across the counter in a semicircle to learn their commands, can best appreciate this mediæval Teuton, who kept a shop as a dog keeps a kennel, and sat at the exclusion of custom snoring like a pig.

Denys and Gerard stood and contemplated this curiosity; emblem, permit me to remark, of the lets and hindrances to commerce that characterised his epoch.

"Jump over him!"

"The door is too low."

"March through him!"

"The man is too thick."

"What is the coil?" inquired a mumbling voice from the interior; apprentice with his mouth full.

"We want to get into your shop."

"What for, in Heaven's name??!!!"

"Shoon, lazy bones!"

The ire of the apprentice began to rise at such an explanation. "And could ye find no hour out of all the twelve to come pestering us for shoon, but the one little, little hour my master takes his nap, and I sit down to my dinner, when all the rest of the world is full long ago?"

Denys heard, but could not follow the sense. "Waste no more time talking their German gibberish," said he; "take out thy knife and tickle his fat ribs."

"That will I not," said Gerard.

"Then here goes; I'll prong him with this."

Gerard seized the mad fellow's arm in dismay, for he had been long enough in the country to guess that the whole town would take part in any brawl with the native against a stranger. But Denys twisted away from him, and the crossbow bolt in his hand was actually on the road to the sleeper's ribs; but at that very moment two females crossed the road towards him; he saw the blissful vision, and instantly forgot what he was about, and awaited their approach with unreasonable joy.

Though companions, they were not equals, except in attractiveness to a Burgundian crossbow man; for one was very tall, the other short, and by one of those anomalies which society, however primitive, speedily establishes, the long one held up the little one's tail. The tall one wore a plain linen coif on her head, a little program cloak over her shoulders, a grey kirtle, and a

short farthingale or petticoat of bright red cloth, and feet and legs quite bare, though her arms were veiled in tight linen sleeves.

The other a kirtle broadly trimmed with fur, her arms in double sleeves, whereof the inner of yellow satin clung to the skin; the outer, all befurred, were open at the inside of the elbow, and so the arm passed through and left them dangling. Velvet head-dress, huge purse at girdle, gorgeous train, bare legs. And thus they came on, the citizen's wife strutting, and the maid gliding after, holding her mistress's train devoutly in both hands, and bending and winding her lithe body prettily enough to do it. Imagine (if not pressed for time) a bantam, with a guinea-hen stepping obsequious at its stately heel.

This pageant made straight for the shoemaker's shop. Denys louted low; the worshipful lady nodded graciously, but rapidly, having business on hand, or rather on foot; for in a moment she poked the point of her little shoe into the sleeper, and worked it round in him like a gimlet, till with a long snarl he woke. The incarnate shutter rising and grumbling vaguely, the lady swept in and deigned him no further notice. He retreated to his neighbour's shop, the tailor's, and sitting on the step, protected it from the impertinence of morning calls. Neighbours should be neighbourly.

Denys and Gerard followed the dignity into the shop, where sat the apprentice at dinner; the maid stood outside with her insteps crossed, leaning against the wall, and tapping it with her nails.

"Those yonder," said the dignity, briefly, pointing with an imperious little white hand to some yellow shoes gilded at the toe. While the apprentice stood stock still, neutralised by his dinner and his duty, Denys sprang at the shoes, and brought them to her; she smiled, and calmly seating herself, protruded her foot, shod, but hoseless and scented. Down went Denys on his knees, and drew off her shoe, and tried the new ones on the white skin devoutly. Finding she had a willing victim, she abused the opportunity, tried

first one pair, then another, then the first again, and so on, balancing and hesitating for about half an hour, to Gerard's disgust, and Denys's weak delight. At last she was fitted, and handed two pair of yellow and one pair of red shoes out to her servant. Then was heard a sigh. It burst from the owner of the shop: he had risen from slumber, and was now hovering about, like a partridge near her brood in danger. "There go all my coloured shoes," said he, as they disappeared in the girl's apron.

The lady departed: Gerard fitted himself with a stout pair, asked the price, paid it without a word, and gave his old ones to a beggar in the street, who blessed him in the market-place, and threw them furiously down a well in the suburbs. The comrades left the shop, and in it two melancholy men, that looked, and even talked, as if they had been robbed wholesale.

"My shoon are sore worn," said Denys, grinding his teeth; "but I'll go barefoot till I reach France, ere I'll leave my money with such churls as these."

The Dutchman replied calmly, "They seem indifferent well sewn."

As they drew near the Rhine, they passed through forest after forest, and now for the first time ugly words sounded in travellers' mouths, seated around stoves. "Thieves!" "black gangs!" "cut-throats!" etc.

The very rustics were said to have a custom hereabouts of murdering the unwary traveller in these gloomy woods, whose dark and devious windings enabled those who were familiar with them to do deeds of rapine and blood undetected, or, if detected, easily to baffle pursuit.

Certain it was, that every clown they met carried, whether for offence or defence, a most formidable weapon; a light axe with a short pike at the head, and a long slender handle of ash or yew, well seasoned. These the natives could all throw with singular precision, so as to make the point strike an object at several yards' distance, or could slay a bullock at hand with a stroke of the blade. Gerard bought one and

practised with it. Denys quietly filed and ground his bolt sharp, whistling the whilst; and when they entered a gloomy wood, he would unsling his crossbow and carry it ready for action; but not so much like a traveller fearing an attack, as a sportsman watchful not to miss a snap shot.

One day, being in a forest a few leagues from Düseldorf, as Gerard was walking like one in a dream, thinking of Margaret, and scarce seeing the road he trode, his companion laid a hand on his shoulder, and strung his crossbow with glittering eye. "Hush!" said he, in a low whisper that startled Gerard more than thunder. Gerard grasped his axe tight, and shook a little: he heard a rustling in the wood hard by, and at the same moment Denys sprang into the wood, and his crossbow went to his shoulder, even as he jumped. Twang! went the metal string; and after an instant's suspense he roared, "Run forward, guard the road, he is hit! he is hit!"

Gerard darted forward, and as he ran a young bear burst out of the wood right upon him; finding itself intercepted, it went up on its hind legs with a snarl, and though not half grown, opened formidable jaws and long claws. Gerard, in a fury of excitement and agitation, flung himself on it, and delivered a tremendous blow on its nose with his axe, and the creature staggered; another, and it lay grovelling, with Gerard hacking it.

"Hallo! stop! you are mad to spoil the meat."

"I took it for a robber," said Gerard, panting. "I mean I had made ready for a robber, so I could not hold my hand."

"Ay, these chattering travellers have stuffed your head full of thieves and assassins; they have not got a real live robber in their whole nation. Nay, I'll carry the beast; bear thou my crossbow."

"We will carry it by turns then," said Gerard, "for 'tis a heavy load: poor thing, how its blood drips. Why did we slay it?"

"For supper and the reward the bailie of the next town shall give us."

"And for that it must die, when it had but just begun to live; and perchance it hath a mother that will miss it sore this night, and loves it as ours love us; more than mine does me."

"What, know you not that his mother was caught in a pitfall last month, and her skin is now at the tanner's? and his father was stuck full of cloth-yard shafts t'other day, and died like Julius Cæsar, with his hands folded on his bosom, and a dead dog in each of them?"

But Gerard would not view it jestingly: "Why, then," said he, "we have killed one of God's creatures that was all alone in the world—as I am this day, in this strange land."

"You young milksop," roared Denys, "these things must not be looked at so, or not another bow would be drawn nor quarel fly in forest nor battlefield. Why, one of your kidney consorting with a troop of pikemen should turn them to a row of milk-pails; it is ended, to Rome thou goest not alone, for never wouldst thou reach the Alps in a whole skin. I take thee to Remiremont, my native place, and there I marry thee to my young sister, she is blooming as a peach. Thou shakest thy head? ah! I forgot; thou lovest elsewhere, and art a one woman man, a creature to me scarce conceivable. Well then I shall find thee not a wife, nor a leman, but a friend; some honest Burgundian who shall go with thee as far as Lyons; and much I doubt that honest fellow will be myself, into whose liquor thou hast dropped sundry powders to make me love thee; for erst I endured not doves in doublet and hose. From Lyons, I say, I can trust thee by ship to Italy, which being by all accounts the very stronghold of milksops, thou wilt there be safe; they will hear thy words, and make thee their duke in a twinkling."

Gerard sighed: "In sooth I love not to think of this Düsseldorf, where we are to part company, good friend."

They walked silently, each thinking of the separation at hand; the thought checked trifling conversation, and

at these moments it is a relief to do something, however insignificant. Gerard asked Denys to lend him a bolt. "I have often shot with a longbow, but never with one of these!"

"Draw thy knife and cut this one out of the cub," said Denys slily.

"Nay, nay, I want a clean one."

Denys gave him three out of his quiver.

Gerard strung the bow, and levelled it at a bough that had fallen into the road at some distance. The power of the instrument surprised him; the short but thick steel bow jarred him to the very heel as it went off, and the swift steel shaft was invisible in its passage; only the dead leaves, with which November had carpeted the narrow road, flew about on the other side of the bough.

"Ye aimed a thought too high," said Denys.

"What a deadly thing! no wonder it is driving out the longbow—to Martin's much discontent."

"Ay, lad," said Denys triumphantly, "it gains ground every day, in spite of their laws and their proclamations to keep up the yewen bow, because forsooth their grandsires shot with it, knowing no better. You see, Gerard, war is not pastime. Men will shoot at their enemies with the hittingest arm and the killingest, not with the longest and missingest."

"Then these new engines I hear of will put both bows down; for these with a pinch of black dust, and a leaden ball, and a child's finger, shall slay you Mars and Goliath, and the Seven Champions."

"Pooh! pooh!" said Denys warmly; "petrone nor harquebuss shall ever put down Sir Arbalest. Why, we can shoot ten times while they are putting their charcoal and their lead into their leathern smoke belchers, and then kindling their matches. All that is too fumbling for the field of battle; there a soldier's weapon needs be aye ready, like his heart."

Gerard did not answer, for his ear was attracted by a sound behind them. It was a peculiar sound, too, like something heavy, but not hard, rushing softly over the dead leaves. He turned round with some little

curiosity. A colossal creature was coming down the road at about sixty paces distance.

He looked at it in a sort of calm stupor at first, but the next moment he turned ashy pale.

"Denys!" he cried. "Oh, God! Denys!"

Denys whirled round.

It was a bear.

It was tearing along with its huge head down, running on a hot scent.

The very moment he saw it Denys said in a sickening whisper—

"THE CUB!"

Oh! the concentrated horror of that one word, whispered hoarsely, with dilating eyes! For in that syllable it all flashed upon them both like a sudden stroke of lightning in the dark—the bloody trail, the murdered cub, the mother upon them, *and it.* DEATH.

All this in a moment of time. The next, she saw them. Huge as she was, she seemed to double herself (it was her long hair bristling with rage): she raised her head big as a bull's, her swine-shaped jaws opened wide at them, her eyes turned to blood and flame, and she rushed upon them, scattering the leaves about her like a whirlwind as she came.

"Shoot!" screamed Denys, but Gerard stood shaking from head to foot, useless.

"Shoot, man! ten thousand devils, shoot! too late! Tree! tree!" and he dropped the cub, pushed Gerard across the road, and flew to the first tree and climbed it, Gerard the same on his side; and as they fled, both men uttered inhuman howls like savage creatures grazed by death.

With all their speed one or other would have been torn to fragments at the foot of his tree; but the bear stopped a moment at the cub.

Without taking her bloodshot eyes off those she was hunting, she smelt it all round, and found, how, her Creator only knows, that it was dead, quite dead. She gave a yell such as neither of the hunted ones had ever heard, nor dreamed to be in nature, and flew after

Denys. She reared and struck at him as he climbed. He was just out of reach.

Instantly she seized the tree, and with her huge teeth tore a great piece out of it with a crash. Then she reared again, dug her claws deep into the bark, and began to mount it slowly, but as surely as a monkey.

Denys's evil star had led him to a dead tree, a mere shaft, and of no very great height. He climbed faster than his pursuer, and was soon at the top. He looked this way and that for some bough of another tree to spring to. There was none; and if he jumped down, he knew the bear would be upon him ere he could recover the fall, and make short work of him. Moreover, Denys was little used to turning his back on danger, and his blood was rising at being hunted. He turned to bay.

"My hour is come," thought he. "Let me meet death like a man." He kneeled down and grasped a small shoot to steady himself, drew his long knife, and clenching his teeth, prepared to job the huge brute as soon as it should mount within reach.

Of this combat the result was not doubtful.

The monster's head and neck were scarce vulnerable for bone and masses of hair. The man was going to sting the bear, and the bear to crack the man like a nut.

Gerard's heart was better than his nerves. He saw his friend's mortal danger, and passed at once from fear to blindish rage. He slipped down his tree in a moment, caught up the crossbow, which he had dropped in the road, and running furiously up, sent a bolt into the bear's body with a loud shout. The bear gave a snarl of rage and pain, and turned its head irresolutely.

"Keep aloof!" cried Denys, "or you are a dead man."

"I care not;" and in a moment he had another bolt ready and shot it fiercely into the bear, screaming, "Take that! take that!"

Denys poured a volley of oaths down at him. "Get away, idiot!"

He was right: the bear finding so formidable and

noisy a foe behind him, slipped growling down the tree, rending deep furrows in it as she slipped. Gerard ran back to his tree and climbed it swiftly. But while his legs were dangling some eight feet from the ground, the bear came rearing and struck with her fore paw, and out flew a piece of bloody cloth from Gerard's hose. He climbed, and climbed; and presently he heard as it were in the air a voice say, "Go out on the bough!" He looked, and there was a long massive branch before him shooting upwards at a slight angle: he threw his body across it, and by a series of convulsive efforts worked up it to the end.

Then he looked round panting.

The bear was mounting the tree on the other side. He heard her claws scrape, and saw her bulge on both sides of the massive tree. Her eye not being very quick, she reached the fork and passed it, mounting the main stem. Gerard drew breath more freely. The bear either heard him, or found by scent she was wrong: she paused; presently she caught sight of him. She eyed him steadily, then quietly descended to the fork.

Slowly and cautiously she stretched out a paw and tried the bough. It was a stiff oak branch, sound as iron. Instinct taught the creature this: it crawled carefully out on the bough, growling savagely as it came.

Gerard looked wildly down. He was forty feet from the ground. Death below. Death moving slow but sure on him in a still more horrible form. His hair bristled. The sweat poured from him. He sat helpless, fascinated, tongue-tied.

As the fearful monster crawled growling towards him, incongruous thoughts coursed through his mind. Margaret: the Vulgate, where it speaks of the rage of a she-bear robbed of her whelps—Rome—Eternity.

The bear crawled on. And now the stupor of death fell on the doomed man; he saw the open jaws and bloodshot eyes coming, but in a mist.

As in a mist he heard a twang; he glanced down; Denys, white and silent as death, was shooting up at

the bear. The bear snarled at the twang, but crawled on. Again the crossbow twanged, and the bear snarled, and came nearer. Again the crossbow twanged, and the next moment the bear was close upon Gerard, where he sat, with hair standing stiff on end and eyes starting from their sockets, palsied. The bear opened her jaws like a grave, and hot blood spouted from them upon Gerard as from a pump. The bough rocked. The wounded monster was reeling; it clung, it stuck its sickles of claws deep into the wood; it toppled, its claws held firm, but its body rolled off, and the sudden shock to the branch shook Gerard forward on his stomach with his face upon one of the bear's straining paws. At this, by a convulsive effort, she raised her head up, up, till he felt her hot fetid breath. Then huge teeth snapped together loudly close below him in the air, with a last effort of baffled hate. The ponderous carcass rent the claws out of the bough, then pounded the earth with a tremendous thump. There was a shout of triumph below, and the very next instant a cry of dismay, for Gerard had swooned, and, without an attempt to save himself, rolled headlong from the perilous height.

X.

DENYS caught at Gerard, and somewhat checked his fall; but it may be doubted whether this alone would have saved him from breaking his neck, or a limb. His best friend now was the dying bear, on whose hairy carcass his head and shoulders descended. Denys tore him off her. It was needless. She panted still, and her limbs quivered, but a hare was not so harmless; and soon she breathed her last; and the judicious Denys propped Gerard up against her, being soft, and fanned him. He came to by degrees, but confused, and feeling the bear all around him, rolled away, yelling.

"Courage," cried Denys, "le diable est mort."

"Is it dead? quite dead?" inquired Gerard from behind a tree; for his courage was feverish, and the cold fit was on him just now, and had been for some time.

"Behold," said Denys, and pulled the brute's ear playfully, and opened her jaws and put in his head, with other insulting antics, in the midst of which Gerard was violently sick.

Denys laughed at him.

"What is the matter now?" said he; "also, why tumble off your perch just when we had won the day?"

"I swooned, I trow."

"But *why*?"

Not receiving an answer, he continued, "Green girls faint as soon as look at you, but then they choose time and place. What woman ever fainted up a tree?"

"She sent her nasty blood all over me. I think the smell must have overpowered me. Faugh! I hate blood."

"I do believe it potently."

"See what a mess she has made me!"

"But with her blood, not yours. I pity the enemy that strives to satisfy you."

"You need not to brag, Maître Denys; I saw you under the tree, the colour of your shirt."

"Let us distinguish," said Denys, colouring; "it is permitted to tremble *for a friend*."

Gerard, for answer, flung his arms round Denys's neck in silence.

"Look here," whined the stout soldier, affected by this little gush of nature and youth, "was ever aught so like a woman? I love thee, little milksop—go to. Good! behold him on his knees now. What new caprice is this?"

"Oh, Denys, ought we not to return thanks to Him who has saved both our lives against such fearful odds?" And Gerard kneeled, and prayed aloud. And presently he found Denys kneeling quiet beside him, with his hands across his bosom, after the custom of his nation, and a face as long as his arm. When they rose, Gerard's countenance was beaming.

"Good Denys," said he, "Heaven will reward thy piety."

"Ah, bah! I did it out of politeness," said the Frenchman. "It was to please thee, little one. C'est égal: 'twas well and orderly prayed, and edified me to the core while it lasted. A bishop had scarce handled the matter better; so now our evensong being sung, and the saints enlisted with us—marchons."

Ere they had taken two steps, he stopped. "By-the-by, the cub!"

"Oh, no, no!" cried Gerard.

"You are right. It is late. We have lost time climbing trees, and tumbling off 'em, and swooning, and vomiting, and praying, and the brute is heavy to carry. And now I think on't, we shall have papa after it next; these bears make such a coil about an odd cub. What is this? you are wounded! you are wounded!"

"Not I."

"He is wounded: miserable that I am!"

"Be calm, Denys. I am not touched; I feel no pain anywhere."

"You? you only feel when another is hurt," cried Denys, with great emotion; and throwing himself on his knees, he examined Gerard's leg with glistening eyes.

"Quick! quick! before it stiffens," he cried, and hurried him on.

"Who makes the coil about nothing now?" inquired Gerard composedly.

Denys's reply was a very indirect one.

"Be pleased to note," said he, "that I have a bad heart. You were man enough to save my life, yet I must sneer at you, a novice in war. Was not I a novice once myself? Then you fainted from a wound, and I thought you swooned for fear, and called you a milksop. Briefly, I have a bad tongue and a bad heart."

"Denys!"

"Plait-il?"

"You lie."

"You are very good to say so, little one, and I am

eternally obliged to you," mumbled the remorseful Denys.

Ere they had walked many furlongs, the muscles of the wounded leg contracted and stiffened, till presently Gerard could only just put his toe to the ground, and that with great pain.

At last he could bear it no longer.

"Let me lie down and die," he groaned, "for this is intolerable."

Denys represented that it was afternoon, and the nights were now frosty; and cold and hunger ill companions; and that it would be unreasonable to lose heart, a certain great personage being notoriously defunct. So Gerard leaned upon his axe, and hobbled on; but presently he gave in, all of a sudden, and sank helpless in the road.

Denys drew him aside into the wood, and to his surprise gave him his crossbow and bolts, enjoining him strictly to lie quiet, and if any ill-looking fellows should find him out and come to him, to bid them keep aloof; and should they refuse, to shoot them dead at twenty paces. "Honest men keep the path; and, knaves in a wood, none but fools do parley with them." With this he snatched up Gerard's axe, and set off running—not, as Gerard expected, towards Düsseldorf, but on the road they had come.

Gerard lay aching and smarting, and to him Rome, that seemed so near at starting, looked far, far off, now that he was two hundred miles nearer it. But soon all his thoughts turned Sevenbergen-wards. How sweet it would be one day to hold Margaret's hand, and tell her all he had gone through for her! The very thought of it and her soothed him; and in the midst of pain and irritation of the nerves he lay resigned, and sweetly, though faintly, smiling.

XI.

It was a dismal night, dark as pitch, and blowing hard. They could neither see, nor hear, nor be seen, nor heard; and for aught I know, passed like ghosts close to their foes. These they almost forgot in the

natural horrors of the black tempestuous night, in which they seemed to grope and hew their way as in black marble. When the moon rose they were many a league from Düsseldorf. But they still trudged on. Presently they came to a huge building.

"Courage!" cried Denys, "I think I know this convent. Ay, it is. We are in the see of Juliers. Cologne has no power here.

The next moment they were safe within the walls.

Here Gerard made acquaintance with a monk, who had constructed the great dial in the prior's garden, and a wheel for drawing water, and a winnowing machine for the grain, etc., and had ever some ingenious mechanism on hand. He had made several psalteries and two dulcimers, and was now attempting a set of regalles, or little organ for the choir.

Now Gerard played the humble psaltery a little; but the monk touched that instrument divinely, and showed him most agreeably what a novice he was in music. He also illuminated finely, but could not write so beautifully as Gerard. Comparing their acquirements with the earnestness and simplicity of an age in which accomplishments implied a true natural bent, Youth and Age soon became like brothers, and Gerard was pressed hard to stay that night. He consulted Denys, who assented with a rueful shrug.

Gerard told his old new friend whither he was going, and described their late adventures.

"Alack!" said the good old man, "I have been a great traveller in my day, but none molested me." He then told him to avoid inns; they were always haunted by rogues and roysterers, whence his soul might take harm even did his body escape, and to manage each day's journey so as to lie at some peaceful monastery; then suddenly breaking off and looking as sharp as a needle at Gerard, he asked him how long since he had been shriven? Gerard coloured up and replied feebly—

"Better than a fortnight."

"And thou an exorcist! No wonder perils have overtaken thee. Come, thou must be assoiled out of hand."

"Yes, father," said Gerard, "and with all mine heart;" and was sinking down to his knees, with his hands joined, but the monk stopped him half fretfully—

"Not to me! not to me! not to me! I am as full of the world as thou or any he that lives in't. My whole soul it is in these wooden pipes, and sorry leathern stops, which shall perish—with them whose minds are fixed on such like vanities."

"Dear father," said Gerard, "they are for the use of the Church, and surely that sanctifies the pains and labour spent on them?"

"That is just what the devil has been whispering in mine ear this while," said the monk, putting one hand behind his back and shaking his finger half threateningly, half playfully, at Gerard. "He was even so kind and thoughtful as to mind me that Solomon built the Lord a house with rare hangings, and that this in him was counted gracious and no sin. Oh! he can quote Scripture rarely. But I am not so simple a monk as you think, my lad," cried the good father, with sudden defiance, addressing not Gerard but—Vacancy. "This one toy finished, vigils, fasts, and prayers for me; prayers standing, prayers lying on the chapel floor, and prayers in a right good tub of cold water." He nudged Gerard and winked his eye knowingly. "Nothing he hates and dreads like seeing us monks at our orisons up to our chins in cold water. For *corpus domat aqua*. So now go confess thy little trumpery sins, pardonable in youth and secularity, and leave me to mine, sweet to me as honey, and to be expiated in proportion."

Gerard bowed his head, but could not help saying, "Where shall I find a confessor more holy and clement?"

"In each of these cells," replied the monk simply (they were now in the corridor); "there, go to Brother Anselm, yonder."

Father Anselm was a venerable monk, with an ample head, and a face all dignity and love. Therefore Gerard in confessing to him, and replying to his gentle though searching questions, could not help thinking, "Here is

a head!—Oh dear! oh dear! I wonder whether you will let me draw it when I have done confessing.” And so his own head got confused, and he forgot a crime or two.

The penance inflicted was this: he was to enter the convent church, and prostrating himself, kiss the lowest step of the altar three times; then kneeling on the floor, to say three paternosters and a credo. “This done, come back to me on the instant.”

Accordingly, his short mortification performed, Gerard returned, and found Father Anselm spreading plaster.

“After the soul the body,” said he; “know that I am the chirurgeon here, for want of a better. This is going on thy leg; to cool it, not to burn it; the saints forbid.”

“And now God speed thee, and the saints make thee as good and as happy as thou art beautiful and gracious.” Gerard hoped there was no need to part yet, for he was to dine in the refectory. But Father Anselm told him, with a shade of regret just perceptible and no more, that he did not leave his cell this week, being himself in penitence; and with this he took Gerard’s head delicately in both hands, and kissed him on the brow, and almost before the cell door had closed on him, was back to his pious offices. Gerard went away chilled to the heart by the isolation of the monastic life, and saddened too. “Alas!” he thought, “here is a kind face I must never look to see again on earth; a kind voice gone from mine ear and my heart for ever. There is nothing but meeting and parting in this sorrowful world. Well-a-day! well-a-day!” This pensive mood was interrupted by a young monk who came for him and took him to the refectory; there he found several monks seated at a table, and Denys standing like a poker, being examined as to the towns he should pass through. The friars then clubbed their knowledge, and marked out the route, noting all the religious houses on or near that road; and this they gave Gerard.

And so the pair, Gerard bronzed in the face and

travel-stained from head to foot, and Denys with his shoes in tatters, stiff and footsore both of them, drew near the Burgundian frontier. ✓

XII.

At the next town they came to, suddenly an arbalestrier ran out of a tavern after them, and in a moment his beard and Denys's were like two brushes struck together. It was a comrade. He insisted on their coming into the tavern with him, and breaking a bottle of wine. In course of conversation, he told Denys there was an insurrection in the Duke's Flemish provinces, and soldiers were ordered thither from all parts of Burgundy. "Indeed, I marvelled to see thy face turned this way."

"I go to embrace my folk that I have not seen these three years. Ye can quell a bit of a rising without me, I trow."

Suddenly Denys gave a start. "Dost hear, Gerard? this comrade is bound for Holland."

"What then? ah, a letter! a letter to Margaret! but will he be so good, so kind?"

The soldier with a torrent of blasphemy informed him he would not only take it, but go a league or two out of his way to do it.

In an instant out came inkhorn and paper from Gerard's wallet; and he wrote a long letter to Margaret, and told her briefly what I fear I have spun too tediously; dwelt most on the bear, and the plunge in the Rhine, and the character of Denys, whom he painted to the life. And with many endearing expressions bade her be of good cheer; some trouble and peril there had been, but all that was over now, and his only grief left was, that he could not hope to have a word from her hand till he should reach Rome. He ended with comforting her again as hard as he could. And so absorbed was he in his love and his work, that

he did not see all the people in the room were standing peeping, to watch the nimble and true finger execute such rare penmanship.

Denys, proud of his friend's skill, let him alone, till presently the writer's face worked, and soon the scalding tears began to run down his young cheeks, one after another, on the paper where he was then writing comfort, comfort. Then Denys rudely repulsed the curious, and asked his comrade with a faltering voice whether he had the heart to let so sweet a love-letter miscarry? The other swore by the face of St. Luke he would lose the forefinger of his right hand sooner.

Seeing him so ready, Gerard charged him also with a short, cold letter to his parents; and in it he drew hastily with his pen two hands grasping each other, to signify farewell. By-the-by, one drop of bitterness found its way into his letter to Margaret. "I write to thee alone, and to those who love thee. If my flesh and blood care to hear news of me, they must be kind to thee, and then thou mayest read my letter to them; but not else, and even then let this not out of thy hand, or thou lovest me not. I know what I ask of thee, and why I ask it. Thou knowest not. I am older now by many years than thou art, and I was, a month ago. Therefore obey me in this one thing, dear heart, or thou wilt make me a worse wife than I hope to make thee a husband, God willing."

Gerard now offered money to the soldier. He hesitated, but declined it. "No, no! art comrade of my comrade; and may"——(etc.)——"but thy love for the wench touches me. I'll break another bottle at thy charge an thou wilt, and so cry quits."

"Well said, comrade," cried Denys. "Hadst taken money, I had invited thee to walk in the courtyard and cross swords with me."

"Whereupon I had cut thy comb for thee," retorted the other.

"Hadst done thy endeavour, drôle, I doubt not."

They drank the new bottle, shook hands, adhered to custom, and parted on opposite routes.

This delay, however, somewhat put out Denys's cal-

culations, and evening surprised them ere they reached a little town he was making for, where was a famous hotel. However, they fell in with a roadside auberge, and Denys, seeing a buxom girl at the door, said, "This seems a decent inn," and led the way into the kitchen. They ordered supper, to which no objection was raised, only the landlord requested them to pay for it beforehand. It was not an uncommon proposal in any part of the world. Still it was not universal, and Denys was nettled, and dashed his hand somewhat ostentatiously into his purse and pulled out a gold angel. "Count me the change, and speedily," said he. "You tavernkeepers are more likely to rob me than I you."

While the supper was preparing, Denys disappeared, and was eventually found by Gerard in the yard, helping Manon, his plump but not bright decoy duck, to draw water, and pouring extravagant compliments into her dullish ear. Gerard grunted and returned to table, but Denys did not come in for a good quarter of an hour.

"Uphill work at the end of a march," said he, shrugging his shoulders.

"What matters that to you?" said Gerard drily. "The mad dog bites all the world."

"Exaggerator. You know I bite but the fairer half. Well, here comes supper; that is better worth biting."

During supper the girl kept constantly coming in and out, and looking point-blank at them, especially at Denys; and at last in leaning over him to remove a dish, dropped a word in his ear; and he replied with a nod.

As soon as supper was cleared away, Denys rose and strolled to the door.

Denys found a figure seated by the well. It was Manon; but instead of receiving him as he thought he had a right to expect, coming by invitation, all she did was to sob. He asked her what ailed her? She sobbed. Could he do anything for her? She sobbed.

The good-natured Denys, driven to his wits' end, which was no great distance, proffered the custom of

the country by way of consolation. She repulsed him roughly. "Is it a time for fooling?" said she, and sobbed.

"You seem to think so," said Denys, waxing wroth. But the next moment he added tenderly, "and I, who could never bear to see beauty in distress."

"It is not for myself."

"Who then? your sweetheart?"

"Oh, *que nenni*. My sweetheart is not on earth now, and to think I have not an *écu* to buy masses for his soul"; and in this shallow nature the grief seemed now to be all turned in another direction.

"Come, come," said Denys, "shalt have money to buy masses for thy dead lad; I swear it. Meantime tell me why you weep."

"For you."

"For me? Art mad?"

"No; I am not mad. 'Tis you that were mad to open your purse before him."

The mystery seemed to thicken, and Denys, wearied of stirring up the mud by questions, held his peace to see if it would not clear of itself. Then the girl, finding herself no longer questioned, seemed to go through some internal combat. At last she said, doggedly, and aloud, "I will. The Virgin give me courage! What matters it if they kill me, since he is dead? Soldier, the landlord is out."

"Oh, is he?"

"What, do landlords leave their taverns at this time of night? also see what a tempest! We are sheltered here, but t'other side it blows a hurricane."

Denys said nothing.

"He is gone to fetch the band."

"The band! what band?"

"Those who will cut your throat and take your gold. Wretched man to go and shake gold in an innkeeper's face!"

The blow came so unexpectedly it staggered even Denys, accustomed as he was to sudden perils. He muttered a single word, but in it a volume.

"Gerard!"

"Gerard! What is that? Oh, 'tis thy comrade's name, poor lad. Get him out quick ere they come, and fly to the next town."

"And thou?"

"They will kill me."

"That shall they not. Fly with us."

"'Twill avail me nought; one of the band will be sent to kill me. They are sworn to slay all who betray them."

"I'll take thee to my native place full thirty leagues from hence, and put thee under my own mother's wing, ere they shall hurt a hair o' thy head. But first Gerard. Stay thou here whilst I fetch him!"

As he was darting off, the girl seized him convulsively, and with all the iron strength excitement lends to women. "Stay me not! for pity's sake," he cried; "'tis life or death."

"Sh!—sh!" whispered the girl, shutting his mouth hard with her hand, and putting her pale lips close to him, and her eyes, that seemed to turn backwards, straining towards some indistinct sound.

He listened.

He heard footsteps, many footsteps, and no voices. She whispered in his ear, "They are come."

And trembled like a leaf.

Denys felt it was so. Travellers in that number would never have come in dead silence.

The feet were now at the very door.

"How many?" said he, in a hollow whisper.

"Hush!" and she put her mouth to his very ear.

And who, that had seen this man and woman in that attitude, would have guessed what freezing hearts were theirs, and what terrible whispers passed between them?

"Seven."

"How armed?"

"Sword and dagger; and the giant with his axe. They call him the Abbot."

"And my comrade?"

"Nothing can save him. Better lose one life than two. Fly!"

Denys's blood froze at this cynical advice. "Poor creature, you know not a soldier's heart."

He put his head in his hands a moment, and a hundred thoughts of dangers baffled, whirled through his brain.

"Listen, girl! There is one chance for our lives, if thou wilt but be true to us. Run to the town, to the nearest tavern, and tell the first soldier there, that a soldier here is sore beset, but armed, and his life to be saved if they will but run. Then to the bailiff. But first to the soldiers. Nay, not a word, but buss me, good lass, and fly! men's lives hang on thy heels."

She kilted up her gown to run. He came round to the road with her, saw her cross the road cringing with fear, then glide away, then turn into an erect shadow, then melt away in the storm.

And now he must get to Gerard. But how? He had to run the gauntlet of the whole band. He asked himself, what was the worst thing they could do? for he had learned in war that an enemy does, not what you hope he will do, but what you hope he will not do. "Attack me as I enter the kitchen! Then I must not give them time."

Just as he drew near to the latch, a terrible thought crossed him. "Suppose they had already dealt with Gerard. Why then," thought he, "nought is left but to kill, and be killed"; and he strung his bow, and walked rapidly into the kitchen. There were seven hideous faces seated round the fire, and the landlord pouring them out neat brandy, blood's forerunner in every age.

"What! company!" cried Denys gaily; "one minute, my lads, and I'll be with you"; and he snatched up a lighted candle off the table, opened the door that led to the staircase, and went up it hallooing, "What, Gerard! whither hast thou skulked to?" There was no answer.

He hallooed louder, "Gerard, where art thou?"

After a moment, in which Denys lived an hour of agony, a peevish half-inarticulate noise issued from the

room at the head of the little stairs. Denys burst in, and there was Gerard asleep.

"Thank God!" he said, in a choking voice, then began to sing loud, untuneful ditties. Gerard put his fingers into his ears; but presently he saw in Denys's face a horror that contrasted strangely with this sudden merriment.

"What ails thee?" said he, sitting up and staring.

"Hush!" said Denys, and his hand spoke even more plainly than his lips. "Listen to me."

Denys then pointing significantly to the door, to show Gerard sharp ears were listening hard by, continued his song aloud, but under cover of it threw in short muttered syllables.

"(Our lives are in peril.)

"(Thieves.)

"(Thy doublet.)

"(Thy sword.)

"Aid.

"Coming.

"Put off time." Then aloud—

"Well, now, wilt have t'other bottle?—Say Nay."

"No, not I."

"But I tell thee, there are half-a-dozen jolly fellows. —Tired."

"Ay, but I am too wearied," said Gerard. "Go thou."

"Nay, nay!" Then he went to the door and called out cheerfully, "Landlord, the young milksop will not rise. Give those honest fellows t'other bottle. I will pay for't in the morning."

He heard a brutal and fierce chuckle.

Having thus by observation made sure the kitchen door was shut, and the miscreants were not actually listening, he examined the chamber door closely, then quietly shut it, but did not bolt it, and went and inspected the window.

It was too small to get out of, and yet a thick bar of iron had been let in the stone to make it smaller; and just as he made this chilling discovery, the outer door of the house was bolted with a loud clang.

Denys groaned, "The beasts are in the shambles."

But would the thieves attack them while they were awake? Probably not.

Not to throw away this their best chance, the poor souls now made a series of desperate efforts to converse, as if discussing ordinary matters, and by this means Gerard learned all that had passed, and that the girl was gone for aid.

"Pray Heaven she may not lose heart by the way," said Denys sorrowfully.

And Denys begged Gerard's forgiveness for bringing him out of his way for this.

Gerard forgave him.

"I would fear them less, Gerard, but for one they call the Abbot. I picked him out at once. Taller than you, bigger than us both put together. Fights with an axe. Gerard, a man to lead a herd of deer to battle. I shall kill that man to-night, or he will kill me. I think somehow 'tis he will kill me."

"Saints forbid! Shoot him at the door! What avails his strength against your weapon?"

"I shall pick him out; but if it comes to hand fighting, run swiftly under his guard, or you are a dead man. I tell thee neither of us may stand a blow of that axe; thou never sawest such a body of a man."

Gerard was for bolting the door; but Denys with a sign showed him that half the door-post turned outward on a hinge, and the great bolt was little more than a blind. "I have forborne to bolt it," said he, "that they may think us the less suspicious."

Near an hour rolled away thus. It seemed an age. Yet it was but a little hour, and the town was a league distant. And some of the voices in the kitchen became angry and impatient.

"They will not wait much longer," said Denys, "and we have no chance at all unless we surprise them."

"I will do whate'er you bid," said Gerard meekly.

There was a cupboard on the same side as the door, but between it and the window. It reached nearly to

the ground, but not quite. Denys opened the cupboard door and placed Gerard on a chair behind it. "If they run for the bed, strike at the napes of their necks! a sword cut there always kills or disables." He then arranged the bolsters and their shoes in the bed so as to deceive a person peeping from a distance, and drew the short curtains at the head.

Meantime Gerard was on his knees. Denys looked round and saw him.

"Ah!" said Denys, "above all, pray them to forgive me for bringing you into this guetapens!"

And now they grasped hands and looked in one another's eyes; oh, such a look! Denys's hand was cold, and Gerard's warm.

They took their posts.

Denys blew out the candle.

"We must keep silence now."

But in the terrible tension of their nerves and very souls they found they could hear a whisper fainter than any man could catch at all outside that door. They could hear each other's hearts thump at times.

"Good news!" breathed Denys, listening at the door.

"They are casting lots."

"Pray that it may be the Abbot."

"Yes. Why?"

"If he comes alone I can make sure of him."

"Denys!"

"Ay!"

"I fear I shall go mad if they do not come soon."

"Shall I feign sleep? Shall I snore?"

"Will that——?"

"Perhaps."

"Do then, and God have mercy on us!"

Denys snored at intervals.

There was a scuffling of feet heard in the kitchen, and then all was still.

Denys snored again, then took up his position behind the door.

But he or they who had drawn the lot seemed determined to run no foolish risks. Nothing was attempted in a hurry.

When they were almost starved with cold, and waiting for the attack, the door on the stairs opened softly and closed again. Nothing more.

There was another harrowing silence.

Then a single light footstep on the stair; and nothing more.

Then a light crept under the door; and nothing more.

Presently there was a gentle scratching, not half so loud as a mouse's, and the false door-post opened by degrees, and left a perpendicular space, through which the light streamed in. The door, had it been bolted, would now have hung by the bare tip of the bolt, which went into the real door-post, but as it was, it swung gently open of itself. It opened inwards, so Denys did not raise his crossbow from the ground, but merely grasped his dagger.

The candle was held up, and shaded from behind by a man's hand.

He was inspecting the beds from the threshold, satisfied that his victims were both in bed.

The man glided into the apartment. But at the first step something in the position of the cupboard and chair made him uneasy. He ventured no further, but put the candle on the floor and stooped to peer under the chair; but as he stooped an iron hand grasped his shoulder, and a dagger was driven so fiercely through his neck that the point came out at his gullet. There was a terrible hiccough, but no cry; and half-a-dozen silent strokes followed in swift succession, each a death-blow, and the assassin was laid noiselessly on the floor.

Denys closed the door, bolted it gently, drew the post to, and even while he was doing it whispered Gerard to bring a chair. It was done.

"Help me set him up."

"Dead?"

"Parbleu."

"What for?"

"Frighten them! Gain time."

Even while saying this, Denys had whipped a piece of string round the dead man's neck, and tied him to the chair, and there the ghastly figure sat fronting the door.

"Denys, I can do better. Saints forgive me!"

"What? Be quick then, we have not many moments."

And Denys got his crossbow ready, and tearing off his straw mattress, reared it before him and prepared to shoot the moment the door should open, for he had no hope any more would come singly when they found the first did not return.

While thus employed, Gerard was busy about the seated corpse, and to his amazement Denys saw a luminous glow spreading rapidly over the white face.

Gerard blew out the candle; and on this the corpse's face shone still more like a glowworm's head.

Denys shook in his shoes, and his teeth chattered.

"What, in Heaven's name, is this?" he whispered.

"Hush! 'tis but phosphorus, but 'twill serve."

"Away! they will surprise thee."

In fact uneasy mutterings were heard below, and at last a deep voice said, "What makes him so long? is the drôle rifling them?"

It was their comrade they suspected then, not the enemy. Soon a step came softly but rapidly up the stairs; the door was gently tried.

When this resisted, which was clearly not expected, the sham post was very cautiously moved, and an eye no doubt peeped through the aperture; for there was a howl of dismay, and the man was heard to stumble back and burst into the kitchen, where a Babel of voices rose directly on his return.

Gerard ran to the dead thief and began to work on him again.

"Back, madman!" whispered Denys.

"Nay, nay. I know these ignorant brutes; they

will not venture here awhile. I can make him ten times more fearful."

"At least close that opening! Let them not see you at your devilish work."

Gerard closed the sham post, and in half a minute his brush made the dead head a sight to strike any man with dismay. He put his art to a strange use, and one unparalleled perhaps in the history of mankind. He illuminated his dead enemy's face to frighten his living foe: the staring eyeballs he made globes of fire; the teeth he left white, for so they were more terrible by the contrast; but the palate and tongue he tipped with fire, and made one lurid cavern of the red depths the chapfallen jaw revealed; and on the brow he wrote in burning letters, "*La Mort.*" And while he was doing it the stout Denys was quaking, and fearing the vengeance of Heaven; for one man's courage is not another's; and the band of miscreants below were quarrelling and disputing loudly, and now without disguise.

The steps that led down to the kitchen were fifteen, but they were nearly perpendicular: there was therefore in point of fact no distance between the besiegers and besieged, and the latter now caught almost every word. At last one was heard to cry out, "I tell ye the devil has got him and branded him with hell-fire. I am more like to leave this cursed house than go again into a room that is full of fiends!"

"Art drunk? or mad? or a coward?" said another.

"Call me a coward, I'll give thee my dagger's point, and send thee where Pierre sits o' fire for ever."

"Come, no quarrelling when work is afoot," roared a tremendous diapason, "or I'll brain ye both with my fist, and send ye where we shall all go soon or late."

"The Abbot," whispered Denys gravely.

He felt the voice he had just heard could belong to no man but the colossus he had seen in passing through the kitchen. It made the place vibrate. The quarrelling continued some time, and then there was a dead silence.

"Look out, Gerard."

"Ay. What will they do next?"

"We shall soon know."

"Shall I wait for you, or cut down the first that opens the door?"

"Wait for me, lest we strike the same and waste a blow. Alas! we cannot afford that."

Dead silence.

Sudden came into the room a thing that made them start and their hearts quiver.

And what was it? A moonbeam.

Even so can this machine, the body, by the soul's action, be strung up to start and quiver. The sudden ray shot keen and pure into that shamble.

Its calm, cold, silvery soul traversed the apartment in a stream of no great volume, for the window was narrow.

After the first tremor Gerard whispered, "Courage, Denys! God's eye is on us even here." And he fell upon his knees with his face turned towards the window.

Ay, it was like a holy eye opening suddenly on human crime and human passions. Many a scene of blood and crime that pure cold eye has rested on, but on few more ghastly than this, where two men, with a lighted corpse between them, waited panting, to kill and be killed. Nor did the moonlight deaden that horrible corpse-light. If anything it added to its ghastliness; for the body sat at the edge of the moonbeam, which cut sharp across the shoulder and the ear, and seemed blue and ghastly and unnatural by the side of that lurid glow in which the face and eyes and teeth shone horribly. But Denys dared not look that way.

The moon drew a broad stripe of light across the door, and on that his eyes were glued. Presently he whispered, "Gerard!"

Gerard looked and raised his sword.

Acutely as they had listened, they had heard of late

no sound on the stair. Yet there—on the door-post, at the edge of the stream of moonlight, were the tips of the fingers of a hand.

The nails glistened.

Presently they began to crawl and crawl down towards the bolt, but with infinite slowness and caution. In so doing they crept into the moonlight. The actual motion was imperceptible, but slowly, slowly the fingers came out whiter and whiter, but the hand between the main knuckles and the wrist remained dark. Denys slowly raised his crossbow.

He levelled it. He took a long steady aim.

Gerard palpitated. At last the crossbow twanged. The hand was instantly nailed, with a stern jar, to the quivering door-post. There was a scream of anguish. "Cut," whispered Denys eagerly, and Gerard's uplifted sword descended and severed the wrist with two swift blows. A body sank down moaning outside.

The hand remained inside, immovable, with blood trickling from it down the wall. The fierce bolt, slightly barbed, had gone through it and deep into the real door-post.

"Two," said Denys, with terrible cynicism.

He strung his crossbow, and kneeled behind his cover again.

"The next will be the Abbot."

The wounded man moved, and presently crawled down to his companions on the stairs, and the kitchen door was shut.

There nothing was heard now but low muttering. The last incident had revealed the mortal character of the weapons used by the besieged.

"I begin to think the Abbot's stomach is not so great as his body," said Denys.

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when the following events happened all in a couple of seconds. The kitchen door was opened roughly, a heavy but active man darted up the steps without any manner of disguise, and a single ponderous blow sent the door not only off its hinges, but right across the room on to

Denys's fortification, which it struck so rudely as nearly to lay him flat. And in the doorway stood a colossus with a glittering axe.

He saw the dead man with the moon's blue light on half his face, and the red light on the other half and inside his chapfallen jaws: he stared, his arms fell, his knees knocked together, and he crouched with terror.

"LA MORT!" he cried, in tones of terror, and turned and fled. In which act Denys started up and shot him through both jaws. He sprang with one bound into the kitchen, and there leaned on his axe, spitting blood and teeth and curses.

Denys strung his bow and put his hand into his breast.

He drew it out dismayed.

"My last bolt is gone," he groaned.

"But we have our swords, and you have slain the giant."

"No, Gerard," said Denys gravely, "I have not. And the worst is, I have wounded him. Fool! to shoot at a retreating lion. He had never faced thy handiwork again, but for my meddling."

"Ha! to your guard! I hear them open the door."

Then Denys, depressed by the one error he had committed in all this fearful night, felt convinced his last hour had come. He drew his sword, but like one doomed. But what is this? a red light flickers on the ceiling. Gerard flew to the window and looked out. There were men with torches, and breastplates gleaming red. "We are saved! Armed men!" And he dashed his sword through the window shouting, "Quick! quick! we are sore pressed."

"Back!" yelled Denys; "they come! strike none but him!"

That very moment the Abbot and two men with naked weapons rushed into the room. Even as they came, the outer door was hammered fiercely, and the Abbot's comrades hearing it, and seeing the torchlight, turned and fled. Not so the terrible Abbot: wild with rage and pain, he spurned his dead comrade, chair and

all, across the room, then as the men faced him on each side with kindling eyeballs, he waved his tremendous axe like a feather right and left, and cleared a space, then lifted it to hew them both in pieces.

His antagonists were inferior in strength, but not in swiftness and daring, and above all they had settled how to attack him. The moment he reared his axe, they flew at him like cats, and both together. If he struck a full blow with his weapon he would most likely kill one, but the other would certainly kill him: he saw this, and intelligent as well as powerful, he thrust the handle fiercely in Denys's face, and turning, jobbed with the steel at Gerard. Denys went staggering back covered with blood. Gerard had rushed in like lightning, and just as the axe turned to descend on him, drove his sword so fiercely through the giant's body, that the very hilt sounded on his ribs like the blow of a pugilist, and Denys staggering back to help his friend, saw a steel point come out of the Abbot behind.

The stricken giant bellowed like a bull, dropped his axe, and clutching Gerard's throat tremendously, shook him like a child. Then Denys with a fierce snarl drove his sword into the giant's back. "Stand firm now!" and he pushed the cold steel through and through the giant and out at his breast.

Thus horribly spitted on both sides, the Abbot gave a violent shudder, and his heels hammered the ground convulsively. His lips, fast turning blue, opened wide and deep, and he cried, "LA MORT!—LA MORT!—LA MORT!" the first time in a roar of despair, and then twice in a horrorstricken whisper, never to be forgotten.

Just then the street door was forced.

Suddenly the Abbot's arms whirled like windmills, and his huge body wrenched wildly and carried them to the doorway, twisting their wrists and nearly throwing them off their legs.

"He'll win clear yet," cried Denys; "out steel! and in again!"

They tore out their smoking swords, but ere they

could stab again, the Abbot leaped full five feet high, and fell with a tremendous crash against the door below, carrying it away with him like a sheet of paper, and through the aperture the glare of torches burst on the awe-struck faces above, half blinding them.

The thieves at the first alarm had made for the back door, but driven thence by a strong guard ran back to the kitchen, just in time to see the lock forced out off the socket, and half-a-dozen mailed archers burst in upon them. On these in pure despair they drew their swords.

But ere a blow was struck on either side, the staircase door behind them was battered into their midst with one ponderous blow, and with it the Abbot's body came flying, hurled as they thought by no mortal hand, and rolled on the floor spouting blood from back and bosom in two furious jets, and quivered, but breathed no more.

The thieves, smitten with dismay, fell on their knees directly, and the archers bound them, while, above, the rescued ones still stood like statues rooted to the spot, their dripping swords extended in the red torchlight, expecting their indomitable enemy to leap back on them as wonderfully as he had gone.

XIII.

"WHERE be the true men?"

"Here be we. God bless you all! God bless you!"

There was a rush to the stairs, and half-a-dozen hard but friendly hands were held out and grasped them warmly. "Y'have saved our lives, lads," cried Denys; "y'have saved our lives this night."

A wild sight met the eyes of the rescued pair. The room flaring with torches, the glittering breastplates of the archers, their bronzed faces, the white cheeks of the bound thieves, and the bleeding giant, whose dead body these hard men left lying there in its own gore.

Gerard went round the archers and took them each by

the hand with glistening eyes, and on this they all kissed him; and this time he kissed them in return. Then he said to one handsome archer of his own age, "Prithee, good soldier, have an eye to me. A strange drowsiness overcomes me. Let no one cut my throat while I sleep—for pity's sake."

The archer promised with a laugh, for he thought Gerard was jesting; and the latter went off into a deep sleep almost immediately.

Denys was surprised at this, but did not interfere, for it suited his immediate purpose. A couple of archers were inspecting the Abbot's body, turning it half over with their feet, and inquiring, "Which of the two had flung this enormous rogue down from an upper storey like that; they would fain have the trick of his arm."

Denys at first pished and pshawed, but dared not play the braggart, for he said to himself, "That young vagabond will break in and say 'twas the finger of Heaven, and no mortal arm, or some such stuff, and make me look like a fool." But now, seeing Gerard unconscious, he suddenly gave this required information.

"Well, then, you see, comrades, I had run my sword through this one up to the hilt, and one or two more of 'em came buzzing about me, so it behoved me have my sword or die; so I just put my foot against his stomach, gave a tug with my hand and a spring with my foot, and sent him flying to kingdom come! He died in the air, and his carrion rolled in amongst you without ceremony; made you jump, I warrant me. But pikestaves and pillage! what avails prattling of these trifles once they are gone by? buvons, camarades, buvons."

The archers remarked that it was easy to say "buvons" where no liquor was, but not so easy to do it.

"Nay, I'll soon find you liquor. My nose hath a natural alacrity at scenting out the wine. You follow me, and I my nose; bring a torch!" And they left the room, and finding a short flight of stone steps, descended them and entered a large, low, damp cellar.

It smelt close and dank, and the walls were encrusted here and there with what seemed cobwebs, but proved to be saltpetre that had oozed out of the damp stones, and crystallised.

"Oh! the fine mouldy smell," said Denys; "in such placent still lurks the good wine; advance thy torch. Diab! what is that in the corner? A pile of rags? No; 'tis a man."

They gathered round with the torch, and lo! a figure crouched on a heap in the corner, pale as ashes, and shivering.

"Why, it is the landlord," said Denys.

"Get up, thou craven heart!" shouted one of the archers.

"Why, man, the thieves are bound, and we are dry that bound them. Up! and show us thy wine, for no bottles see I here."

"What, be the rascals bound?" stammered the pale landlord; "good news. W—w—wine? that will I, honest sirs."

And he rose with unsure joints and offered to lead the way to the wine cellar. But Denys interposed. "You are all in the dark, comrades. He is in league with the thieves."

"Alack, good soldier, me in league with the accursed robbers! Is that reasonable?"

"The girl said so, any way."

"The girl! What girl? Ah! Curse her, traitress!"

"Well," interposed the other archer, "the girl is not here, but gone on to the bailiff. So let the burghers settle whether this craven be guilty or no, for we caught him not in the act, and let him draw us our wine."

"One moment," said Denys shrewdly. "Why cursed he the girl? If he be a true man, he should bless her, as we do."

"Alas, sir!" said the landlord, "I have but my good name to live by, and I cursed her to you, because you said she had belied me."

"Humph! I trow thou art a thief, and where is the thief that cannot lie with a smooth face? Therefore

hold him, comrades; a prisoner can draw wine an if his hands be not bound."

The landlord offered no objection, but on the contrary said he would with pleasure show them where his little stock of wine was, but hoped they would pay for what they should drink, for his rent was due this two months.

The archers smiled grimly at his simplicity, as they thought it: one of them laid a hand quietly but firmly on his shoulder, the other led on with the torch.

They had reached the threshold when Denys cried "Halt!"

"What is't?"

"Here be bottles in this corner; advance thy light."

The torch-bearer went towards him. He had just taken off his scabbard and was probing the heap the landlord had just been crouched upon.

"Nay, nay," cried the landlord, "the wine is in the next cellar. There is nothing *there*."

"Nothing is mighty hard, then," said Denys, and drew out something with his hand from the heap.

It proved to be only a bone.

Denys threw it on the floor; it rattled.

"There is nought there but the bones of the house," said the landlord.

"Just now 'twas nothing. Now that we have found something, 'tis nothing but bones. Here's another. Humph! look at this one, comrade; and you come too and look at it, and bring yon smooth knave along."

The archer with the torch, whose name was Philippe, held the bone to the light and turned it round and round.

"Well?" said Denys.

"Well, if this was a field of battle, I should say 'twas the shankbone of a man; no more, no less. But 'tisn't a battlefield, nor a churchyard; 'tis an inn."

"True, mate; but yon knave's ashy face is as good a light to me as a field of battle. I read the bone by it. Bring yon face nearer, I say. When the chine is amissing, and the house dog can't look at you without his tail creeping between his legs, who was the thief?"

Good brothers mine, my mind it doth misgive me. The deeper I thrust, the more there be. Mayhap if these bones could tell their tale they would make true men's flesh creep that heard it."

"Alas! young man, what hideous fancies are these! The bones are bones of beeves, and sheep, and kids, and not, as you think, of men and women. Holy saints preserve us!"

"Hold thy peace! thy words are air. Thou hast not got burghers by the ear, that know not a veal knuckle from their grandsire's ribs, but soldiers—men that have gone to look for their dear comrades, and found their bones picked as clean by the crows as these I doubt have been by thee and thy mates. Men and women, saidst thou? And prithee, when spake I a word of women's bones? Wouldst make a child suspect thee. Field of battle, comrade! Was not this house a field of battle half an hour agone? Drag him close to me; let me read his face: now then, what is this, thou knave?" and he thrust a small object suddenly in his face.

"Alas! I know not."

"Well, I would not swear neither; but it is too like the thumb bone of a man's hand: mates, my flesh it creeps. Churchyard! how know I this is not one?"

And he now drew his sword out of the scabbard and began to rake the heap of earth and broken crockery and bones out on the floor.

The landlord assured him he but wasted his time. "We poor innkeepers are sinners," said he; "we give short measure and baptize the wine: we are fain to do these things, the laws are so unjust to us; but we are not assassins. How could we afford to kill our customers? May Heaven's lightning strike me dead if there be any bones there but such as have been used for meat. 'Tis the kitchen wench flings them here; I swear by God's holy mother, by holy Paul, by holy Dominic, and Denys my patron saint—ah!"

Denys held out a bone under his eye in dead silence. It was a bone no man, however ignorant, however lying, could confound with those of sheep or oxen.

The sight of it shut the lying lips, and palsied the heartless heart.

The landlord's hair rose visibly on his head like spikes, and his knees gave way as if his limbs had been struck from under him. But the archers dragged him fiercely up, and kept him erect under the torch, staring fascinated at the dead skull which, white as the living cheek opposed, but no whiter, glared back again at its murderer, whose pale lips now opened and opened, but could utter no sound.

"Ah!" said Denys solemnly, and trembling now with rage, "look on the sockets out of which thou hast picked the eyes, and let them blast thine eyes, that crows shall pick out ere this week shall end. Now, hold thou that while I search on. Hold it, I say, or here I rob the gallows——" and he threatened the quaking wretch with his naked sword, till with a groan he took the skull and held it, almost fainting.

Oh! that every murderer, and contriver of murder, could see him, sick, and staggering with terror, and with his hair on end, holding the cold skull, and feeling that his own head would soon be like it. And soon the heap was scattered, and alas! not one nor two, but many skulls were brought to light, the culprit moaning at each discovery.

Suddenly Denys uttered a strange cry of distress to come from so bold and hard a man, and held up to the torch a mass of human hair. It was long, glossy, and golden. A woman's beautiful hair. At the sight of it the archers instinctively shook the craven wretch in their hands, and he whined.

"I have a little sister with hair just so fair and shining as this," gulped Denys. "Jesu! if it should be hers! There, quick, take my sword, and dagger, and keep them from my hand, lest I strike him dead and wrong the gibbet. And thou, poor innocent victim, on whose head this most lovely hair did grow, hear me swear thus, on bended knee, never to leave this man till I see him broken to pieces on the wheel even for thy sake."

He rose from his knee. "Ay, had he as many lives

as here be hairs, I'd have them all, by God," and he put the hair into his bosom: then in a sudden fury seized the landlord fiercely by the neck, and forced him to his knees, and foot on head ground his face savagely among the bones of his victims, where they lay thickest; and the assassin first yelled, then whined and whimpered, just as a dog first yells, then whines, when his nose is so forced into some leveret or other innocent he has killed.

"Now lend me thy bowstring, Philippe!" He passed it through the eyes of a skull alternately, and hung the ghostly relic of mortality and crime round the man's neck, then pulled him up and kicked him industriously into the kitchen, where one of the aldermen of the burgh had arrived with constables, and was even now taking an archer's deposition.

The grave burgher was much startled at sight of the landlord driven in bleeding from a dozen scratches inflicted by the bones of his own victims, and carrying his horrible collar. But Denys came panting after, and in a few fiery words soon made all clear.

"Bind him like the rest," said the alderman sternly. "I count him the blackest of them all."

While his hands were being bound, the poor wretch begged piteously that "the skull might be taken from him."

"Humph!" said the alderman. "Certes I had not ordered such a thing to be put on mortal man; yet being there, I will not lift voice nor finger to doff it. Methinks it fits thee truly. 'Tis thy ensign, and hangs well above a heart so foul as thine."

He then inquired of Denys if he thought they had secured the whole gang, or but a part.

"Your worship," said Denys, "there are but seven of them, and this landlord. One we slew upstairs, one we trundled down dead, the rest are bound before you."

"Good! go fetch the dead one from upstairs, and lay him beside him I caused to be removed."

Here a voice like a guinea-fowl's broke peevishly in. "Now, now, now, where is the hand? that is what

I want to see." The speaker was a little pettifogging clerk.

"You will find it above, nailed to the door-post by a cross-bow bolt."

"Good!" said the clerk. He whispered his master, "What a goodly show will the *pièces de conviction* make!" and with this he wrote them down, enumerating them in separate squeaks as he penned them. Skulls—Bones—A woman's hair—a thief's hand—1 axe—2 carcasses—1 crossbow bolt. This done, he itched to search the cellar himself; there might be other invaluable morsels of evidence, an ear, or even an earring. The alderman assenting, he caught up a torch and was hurrying thither, when an accident stopped him, and indeed carried him a step or two in the opposite direction.

The constables had gone up the stair in single file.

But the head constable no sooner saw the phosphorescent corpse seated by the bedside, than he stood stupefied; and next he began to shake like one in an ague, and terror gaining on him more and more, he uttered a sort of howl and recoiled swiftly. Forgetting the steps in his recoil, he tumbled over backward on his nearest companion; but *he*, shaken by the shout of dismay, and catching a glimpse of something horrid, was already staggering back, and in no condition to sustain the head constable, who, like most head constables, was a ponderous man. The two carried away the third, and the three the fourth, and they streamed into the kitchen, and settled on the floor, overlapping each other like a sequence laid out on a card-table. The clerk coming hastily with his torch ran an involuntary tilt against the fourth man, who sharing the momentum of the mass, knocked him instantly on his back, the ace of that fair quint; and there he lay kicking and waving his torch, apparently in triumph, but really in convulsion, sense and wind being driven out together by the concussion.

"What is to do now, in Heaven's name?" cried the alderman, starting up with considerable alarm. But Denys explained, and offered to accompany his worship.

"So be it," said the latter. His men picked themselves ruefully up, and the alderman put himself at their head and examined the premises above and below. As for the prisoners, their interrogatory was postponed till they could be confronted with the servant.

Before dawn, the thieves, alive and dead, and all the relics and evidences of crime and retribution, were swept away into the law's net, and the inn was silent and almost deserted. There remained but one constable, and Denys and Gerard, the latter still sleeping heavily.

XIV.

WHEN this was disposed of, Gerard earnestly requested his friend to let the matter drop, since speaking of the other sex to him made him pine so for Margaret, and almost unmanned him with the thought that each step was taking him farther from her. "I am no general lover, Denys. There is room in my heart for one sweetheart, and for one friend. I am far from my dear mistress; and my friend, a few leagues more, and I must lose him too. Oh, let me drink thy friendship pure while I may, and not dilute with any of these stupid females."

"And shalt, honey-pot, and shalt," said Denys kindly. "But as to my leaving thee at Remiremont, reckon thou not on that! For" (three consecutive oaths) "if I do. Nay, I shall propose to thee to stay forty-eight hours there, while I kiss my mother and sisters, and the females generally, and on go you and I together to the sea."

"Denys! Denys!"

"Denys not me! 'Tis settled. Gainsay me not! or I'll go with thee to Rome. Why not? his Holiness the Pope hath ever some little merry pleasant war toward, and a Burgundian soldier is still welcome in his ranks."

On this Gerard opened his heart. "Denys, ere I fell in with thee, I used often to halt on the road, unable to go farther, my puny heart so pulled me back;

and then, after a short prayer to the saints for aid, would I rise and drag my most unwilling body onward. But since I joined company with thee, great is my courage. I have found the saying of the ancients true, that better is a bright comrade on the weary road than a horse-litter; and, dear brother, when I do think of what we have done and suffered together! Savedst my life from the bear, and from yet more savage thieves; and even poor I did make shift to draw thee out of Rhine, and somehow loved thee double from that hour. How many ties tender and strong between us! Had I my will, I'd never, never, never, never part with my Denys on this side the grave. Well-a-day! God His will be done."

"No, my will shall be done this time," shouted Denys. "Le bon Dieu has bigger fish to fry than you or me. I'll go with thee to Rome. There is my hand on it."

"Think what you say! 'Tis impossible. 'Tis too selfish of me."

"I tell thee, 'tis settled. No power can change me. At Remiremont I borrow ten pieces of my uncle, and on we go; 'tis fixed; irrevocable as fate."

They shook hands over it. Then Gerard said nothing, for his heart was too full; but he ran twice round his companion as he walked, then danced backwards in front of him, and finally took his hand, and so on they went hand in hand like sweethearts, till a company of mounted soldiers, about fifty in number, rose to sight on the brow of a hill.

"See the banner of Burgundy," said Denys joyfully; "I shall look out for a comrade among these."

"How gorgeous is the standard in the sun," said Gerard; "and how brave are the leaders with velvet and feathers, and steel breastplates like glassy mirrors!"

When they came near enough to distinguish faces Denys uttered an exclamation: "Why, 'tis the Bastard of Burgundy, as I live. Nay, then: there is fighting a-foot since he is out; a gallant leader, Gerard, rates his life no higher than a private soldier's, and a

soldier's no higher than a tomtit's; and that is the captain for me."

"And see, Denys, the very mules with their great brass frontlets and trappings seem proud to carry them; no wonder men itch to be soldiers"; and in the midst of this innocent admiration the troop came up with them.

"Halt!" cried a stentorian voice. The troop halted. The Bastard of Burgundy bent his brow gloomily on Denys: "How now, arbalestrier, how comes it thy face is turned southward, when every good hand and heart is hurrying northward?"

Denys replied respectfully that he was going on leave, after some years of service, to see his kindred at Remiremont.

"Good. But this is not the time for't; the duchy is disturbed. Ho! bring that dead soldier's mule to the front; and thou mount her and forward with us to Flanders."

"So please your highness," said Denys firmly, "that may not be. My home is close at hand. I have not seen it these three years; and above all, I have this poor youth in charge, whom I may not, cannot leave, till I see him shipped for Rome."

"Dost bandy words with me?" said the chief, with amazement, turning fast to wrath. "Art weary o' thy life? Let go the youth's hand, and into the saddle without more idle words."

Denys made no reply; but he held Gerard's hand the tighter and looked defiance.

At this the Bastard roared, "Jarnac, dismount six of thy archers, and shoot me this white-livered cur dead where he stands—for an example."

The young Count de Jarnac, second in command, gave the order, and the men dismounted to execute it.

"Strip him naked," said the Bastard, in the cold tone of military business, "and put his arms and accoutrements on the spare mule. We'll maybe find some clown worthier to wear them."

Denys groaned aloud, "Am I to be shamed as well as slain?"

"Oh, nay! nay! nay!" cried Gerard, awaking from the stupor into which this thunderbolt of tyranny had thrown him. "He shall go with you on the instant. I'd liever part with him for ever than see a hair of his dear head harmed. Oh, sir, oh, my lord, give a poor boy but a minute to bid his only friend farewell! he will go with you. I swear he shall go with you."

The stern leader nodded a cold contemptuous assent. "Thou, Jarnac, stay with them, and bring him on alive or dead. Forward!" And he resumed his march, followed by all the band but the young Count and six archers, one of whom held the spare mule.

Denys and Gerard gazed at one another haggardly. Oh, what a look!

And after this mute interchange of anguish, they spoke hurriedly, for the moments were flying by.

"Thou goest to Holland: thou knowest where she bides. Tell her all. She will be kind to thee for my sake."

"Oh, sorry tale that I shall carry her! For God's sake go back to 'The Tête d'Or.' I am mad."

"Hush! Let me think: have I nought to say to thee, Denys? my head! my head!"

"Ah! I have it. Make for the Rhine, Gerard! Strasbourg. 'Tis but a step. And down the current to Rotterdam. Margaret is there: I go thither. I'll tell her thou art coming. We shall all be together."

"My lads, haste ye, or you will get us into trouble," said the Count firmly, but not harshly now.

"Oh, sir, one moment! one little moment!" panted Gerard.

"Cursed be the land I was born in! cursed be the race of man! and he that made them what they are!" screamed Denys.

"Hush, Denys, hush! blaspheme not! Oh, God forgive him, he wots not what he says. Be patient, Denys,—be patient: though we meet no more on earth, let us meet in a better world where no blasphemer may enter. To my heart, lost friend; for what are words now?" He held out his arms, and they locked one another in a close embrace. They kissed one another

again and again, speechless, and the tears rained down their cheeks. And the Count Jarnac looked on amazed, but the rougher soldiers, to whom comrade was a sacred name, looked on with some pity in their hard faces. Then at a signal from Jarnac, with kind force and words of rude consolation, they almost lifted Denys on to the mule; and putting him in the middle of them, spurred after their leader. And Gerard ran wildly after (for the lane turned) to see the very last of him; and the last glimpse he caught, Denys was rocking to and fro on his mule, and tearing his hair out. But at this sight something rose in Gerard's throat so high, so high, he could run no more nor breathe, but gasped, and leaned against the snow-clad hedge, seizing it, and choking piteously.

The thorns ran into his hand.

After a bitter struggle he got his breath again; and now began to see his own misfortune. Yet not all at once to realise it, so sudden and numbing was the stroke. He staggered on, but scarce feeling or caring whither he was going; and every now and then he stopped, and his arms fell and his head sank on his chest, and he stood motionless: then he said to himself, "Can this thing be? This must be a dream. 'Tis scarce five minutes since we were so happy, walking handed, faring to Rome together: and we admired them and their gay banners and helmets—oh, hearts of hell!"

All nature seemed to stare now as lonely as himself. Not a creature in sight. No colour but white. He, the ghost of his former self, wandered along among the ghosts of trees, and fields and hedges. Desolate! desolate! desolate! All was desolate.

He knelt and gathered a little snow. "Nay, I dream not; for this *is* snow: cold as the world's heart. It is bloody, too: what may that mean? Fool! 'tis from thy hand. I mind not the wound. Ay, I see: thorns. Welcome! kindly foes: I felt ye not, ye ran not into my heart. Ye are not cruel like men."

He had risen, and was dragging his leaden limbs along, when he heard horses' feet and gay voices behind him. He turned with a joyful but wild hope that the soldiers had relented and were bringing Denys back. But no, it was a gay cavalcade. A gentleman of rank and his favourites in velvet and furs and feathers; and four or five armed retainers in buff jerkins.

They swept gaily by.

Gerard never looked at them after they were gone by: certain gay shadows had come and passed; that was all. He was like one in a dream. But he was rudely wakened; suddenly a voice in front of him cried harshly, "Stand and deliver!" and there were three of the gentleman's servants in front of him. They had ridden back to rob him.

"How, ye false knaves," said he quite calmly; "would ye shame your noble master? He will hang ye to the nearest tree"; and with these words he drew his sword doggedly, and set his back to the hedge.

One of the men instantly levelled his petronel at him.

But another, less sanguinary, interposed. "Be not so hasty! And be not thou so mad! Look yonder!"

Gerard looked, and scarce a hundred yards off the nobleman and his friends had halted, and sat on their horses, looking at the lawless act, too proud to do their own dirty work, but not too proud to reap the fruit, and watch lest their agents should rob them of another man's money.

The milder servant then, a good-natured fellow, showed Gerard resistance was vain; reminded him common thieves often took the life as well as the purse, and assured him it cost a mint to be a gentleman; his master had lost money at play overnight, and was going to visit his leman, and so must take money where he saw it.

"Therefore, good youth, consider that we rob not for ourselves, and deliver us that fat purse at thy girdle without more ado, nor put us to the pain of slitting thy throat and taking it all the same."

"This knave is right," said Gerard calmly, aloud but to himself. "I ought not to fling away my life; Margaret would be so sorry. Take then the poor man's purse to the rich man's pouch; and with it this; tell him, I pray the Holy Trinity each coin in it may burn his hand, and freeze his heart, and blast his soul for ever. Begone and leave me to my sorrow!" He flung them the purse.

They rode away muttering; for his words pricked them a little, a very little; and he staggered on, penniless now as well as friendless, till he came to the edge of a wood. Then, though his heart could hardly feel this second blow, his judgement did; and he began to ask himself what was the use going further? He sat down on the hard road, and ran his nails into his hair, and tried to think for the best—a task all the more difficult that a strange drowsiness was stealing over him. Rome he could never reach without money. Denys had said, "Go to Strasbourg, and down the Rhine home." He would obey Denys. But how get to Strasbourg without money?

Then suddenly seemed to ring in his ears—

"Gyf the world prove harsh and cold,
Come back to the hedde of gold."

"And if I do I must go as her servant; I who am Margaret's. I am a-weary, a-weary. I will sleep, and dream all is as it was. Ah me, how happy were we an hour ago, we little knew how happy. There is a house: the owner well to do. What if I told him my wrong, and prayed his aid to retrieve my purse, and so to Rhine? Fool! is he not a man, like the rest? He would scorn me and trample me lower. Denys cursed the race of men. That will I never; but oh, I gin to loathe and dread them. Nay, here will I lie till sunset: then darkling creep into this rich man's barn, and take by stealth a draught of milk or a handful o' grain, to keep body and soul together. God, who hath seen the rich rob me, will peradventure forgive me. They say 'tis ill sleeping on the snow. Death steals on such sleepers with muffled feet and

honey breath. But what can I? I am a-weary, a-weary. Shall this be the wood where lie the wolves yon old man spoke of? I must e'en trust them: they are not men; and I am so a-weary."

He crawled to the roadside, and stretched out his limbs on the snow, with a deep sigh.

"Ah, tear not thine hair so! teareth my heart to see thee."

"Mar—garet. Never see me more. Poor Mar—ga—ret."

And the too tender heart was still.

And the constant lover, and friend of antique mould, lay silent on the snow; in peril from the weather, in peril from wild beasts, in peril from hunger, friendless and penniless, in a strange land, and not half way to Rome.

XV.

"NAV, Richart," said Catherine at last, "for Heaven's sake let not this one sorry wench set us all by the ears: hath she not made ill blood enough already?"

"In very deed she hath. Fear me not, good mother. Let her come and read the letter of the poor boy she hath by devilish arts bewitched, and then let her go. Give me your words to show her no countenance beyond decent and constrained civility: less we may not, being in our own house; and I will say no more."

On this understanding they awaited the foe. She, for her part, prepared for the interview in a spirit little less hostile.

When Denys brought word they would not come to her, but would receive her, her lip curled, and she bade him observe how in them every feeling, however small, was larger than the love for Gerard.

"Well," said she, "I have not that excuse; so why mimic the petty burgher's pride, the pride of all

unlettered folk? I will go to them for Gerard's sake. Oh, how I loathe them!"

Thus poor good-natured Denys was bringing into one house the materials of an explosion.

Margaret made her toilet in the same spirit that a knight of her day dressed for battle—he to parry blows, and she to parry glances—glances of contempt at her poverty, or of irony at her extravagance. Her kirtle was of English cloth, dark blue, and her farthingale and hose of the same material, but a glossy roan, or claret colour. Not an inch of pretentious fur about her, but plain snowy linen wristbands, and curiously-plaited linen from the bosom of the kirtle up to the commencement of the throat; it did not encircle her throat, but framed it, being square, not round. Her front hair still peeped in two waves much after the fashion which Mary Queen of Scots revived a century later; but instead of the silver net, which would have ill become her present condition, the rest of her head was covered with a very small tight-fitting hood of dark blue cloth, hemmed with silver. Her shoes were red; but the roan petticoat and hose prepared the spectator's mind for the shock, and they set off the arched instep and shapely foot.

Beauty knew its business then as now.

And with all this she kept her enemies waiting, though it was three by the dial.

At last she started, attended by her he-comrade. And when they were half-way, she stopped and said thoughtfully, "Denys!"

"Well, she-general?"

"I must go home" (piteously).

"What, have ye left somewhat behind?"

"Ay."

"What?"

"My courage. Oh! oh! oh!"

"Nay, nay, be brave, she-general. I shall be with you."

"Ay, but wilt keep close to me when I be there?"

Denys promised, and she resumed her march, but gingerly.

Meantime they were all assembled, and waiting for her with a strange mixture of feelings.

Mortification, curiosity, panting affection, aversion to her who came to gratify those feelings, yet another curiosity to see what she was like, and what there was in her to bewitch Gerard and make so much mischief.

At last Denys came alone, and whispered, "The she-comrade is without."

"Fetch her in," said Eli. "Now whist, all of ye. None speak to her but I."

They all turned their eyes to the door in dead silence.

A little muttering was heard outside; Denys's rough organ and a woman's soft and mellow voice.

Presently that stopped; and then the door opened slowly, and Margaret Brandt, dressed as I have described, and somewhat pale, but calm and lovely, stood on the threshold, looking straight before her.

They all rose but Kate, and remained mute and staring.

"Be seated, mistress," said Eli gravely, and motioned to a seat that had been set apart for her.

She took her letter out of her bosom, and kissed it as if she had been alone; then disposed herself to read it, with the air of one who knew she was there for that single purpose.

But as she began, she noticed they had seated her all by herself like a leper. She looked at Denys, and putting her hand down by her side, made him a swift furtive motion to come by her.

He went with an obedient start as if she had cried "March!" and stood at her shoulder like a sentinel; but this zealous manner of doing it revealed to the company that he had been ordered thither; and at that she coloured.

And now she began to read her Gerard, their Gerard, to their eager ears, in a mellow, but clear voice, so soft, so earnest, so thrilling, her very soul seemed to cling about each precious sound. It was a voice as of a woman's bosom set speaking by Heaven itself.

"I do nothing doubt, my Margaret, that long ere this shall meet thy beloved eyes, Denys, my most dear

friend, will have sought thee out, and told thee the manner of our unlooked for and most tearful parting. Therefore I will e'en begin at that most doleful day. What befell him after, poor faithful soul, fain, fain would I hear, but may not. But I pray for him day and night next after thee, dearest. Friend more stanch and loving had not David in Jonathan, than I in him. Be good to him, for poor Gerard's sake."

At these words, which came quite unexpectedly to him, Denys leaned his head on Margaret's high chair, and groaned aloud.

She turned quickly as she sat, and found his hand and pressed it.

And so the sweetheart and the friend held hands while the sweetheart read.

"I went forward all dizzied, like one in an ill dream; and presently a gentleman came up with his servants all on horseback, and had like to have rid o'er me. And he drew rein at the brow of the hill, and sent his armed men back to rob me. They robbed me civilly enough; and took my purse and the last copper, and rid gaily away. I wandered stupid on, a friendless pauper."

There was a general sigh, followed by an oath from Denys.

"Presently a strange dimness came o'er me; I lay down to sleep on the snow. 'Twas ill done, and with store of wolves hard by. Had I loved thee as thou dost deserve, I had shown more manhood. But oh, sweet love, the drowsiness that did crawl o'er me desolate, and benumb me, was more than nature. And so I slept; and but that God was better to us, than I to thee or to myself, from that sleep I ne'er had waked; so all do say. I had slept an hour or two, as I suppose, but no more, when a hand did shake me rudely. I awoke to my troubles. And there stood a servant girl in her holiday suit. 'Are ye mad,' quoth she, in seeming choler, 'to sleep in snow, and under wolves nosen? Art weary o' life, and not long weaned? Come, now,' said she, more kindly, 'get up, like a good lad;' so I did rise up. 'Are ye rich, or are ye poor?'

But I stared at her as one amazed. 'Why, 'tis easy of reply,' quoth she. 'Are ye rich, or are ye poor?' Then I gave a great, loud cry; that she did start back. 'Am I rich, or am I poor? Had ye asked me an hour ago, I had said I am rich. But now I am so poor as sure earth beareth on her bosom none poorer. An hour ago I was rich in a friend, rich in money, rich in hope and spirits of youth; but now the Bastard of Burgundy hath taken my friend, and another gentleman my purse; and I can neither go forward to Rome nor back to her I left in Holland. I am poorest of the poor.' 'Alack!' said the wench. 'Natheless, an ye had been rich ye might ha' lain down again in the snow for any use I had for ye; and then I trow ye had soon fared out o' this world as bare as ye came into 't. But, being poor, you are our man: so come wi' me.' Then I went because she bade me, and because I recked not now whither I went. And she took me to a fine house hard by, and into a noble dining-hall hung with black; and there was set a table with many dishes, and but one plate and one chair. 'Fall to!' said she, in a whisper. 'What, alone?' said I. 'Alone? And which of us, think ye, would eat out of the same dish with ye? Are we robbers o' the dead?' Then she speered where I was born. 'At Tergou,' said I. Says she, 'And when a gentleman dies in that country, serve they not the dead man's dinner up as usual, till he be in the ground, and set some poor man down to it?' I told her, nay. 'She blushed for us then. Here they were better Christians.' So I behoved to sit down. But small was my heart for meat. Then this kind lass sat by me and poured me out wine; and tasting it, it cut me to the heart Denys was not there to drink with me. He doth so love good wine, and women, good, bad, or indifferent. The rich, strong wine curled round my sick heart; and that day first I did seem to glimpse why folk in trouble run to drink so. She made me eat of every dish. 'Twas unlucky to pass one. Nought was here but her master's *daily* dinner.' 'He had a good stomach, then,' said I. 'Ay, lad, and a good heart. Leastways, so we all say now

he is dead; but, being alive, no word on't e'er heard I.' So I did eat as a bird, nibbling of very dish. And she hearing me sigh, and seeing me like to choke at the food, took pity and bade me be of good cheer. I should sup and lie there that night. And she went to the hind, and he gave me a right good bed; and I told him all, and asked him would the law give me back my purse. 'Law!' quoth he; 'law there was none for the poor in Burgundy. Why, 'twas the cousin of the Lady of the Manor, he that had robbed me. He knew the wild spark. The matter must be judged before the lady; and she was quite young, and far more like to hang me for slandering her cousin, and a gentleman, and a handsome man, than to make him give me back my own. Inside the liberties of a town a poor man might now and then see the face of justice; but out among the grand seigneurs and dames—never.' So I said, 'I'll sit down robbed rather than seek justice and find gallows.' They were all most kind to me next day; and the girl proffered me money from her small wage to help me towards Rhine."

"Oh, then, he is coming home! he is coming home!" shouted Denys, interrupting the reader.

She shook her head gently at him, by way of reproof.

"I beg pardon, all the company," said he stiffly.

"'Twas a sore temptation; but being a servant, my stomach rose against it. 'Nay, nay,' said I. She told me I was wrong. 'Twas pride out o' place; poor folk should help one another; or who on earth would?' I said if I could do aught in return 'twere well; but for a free gift, nay: I was overmuch beholden already. Should I write a letter for her? 'Nay, he is in the house at present,' said she. 'Should I draw her picture, and so earn my money?' 'What, can ye?' said she. I told her I could try; and her habit would well become a picture. So she was agog to be limned, and give it her lad. And I set her to stand in a good light, and soon made sketches two, whereof I send thee one, coloured at odd hours. The other I did most hastily, and with little conscience daub, for which may

Heaven forgive me; but time was short. They, poor things, knew no better, and were most proud and joyous; and both kissing me after their country fashion, ('twas the hind that was her sweetheart), they did bid me God-speed; and I towards Rhine."

XVI.

"*January 18.*—In the midst of life we are in death. Oh! dear Margaret, I thought I had lost thee. Here I lie in pain and dole, and shall write thee that, which read you it in a romance ye should cry, 'Most improbable!' And so still wondering that I am alive to write it, and thanking for it God and the saints, this is what befell thy Gerard.

"Yestreen I wearied of being shut up in litter, and of the mule's slow pace, and so went forward; and being, I know not why, strangely full of spirit and hope, as I have heard befall some men when on trouble's brink, seemed to tread on air, and soon distanced them all. Presently I came to two roads, and took the larger; I should have taken the smaller. After travelling a good half-hour, I found my error, and returned; and deeming my company had long passed by, pushed bravely on, but I could not overtake them; and small wonder, as you shall hear. Then I was anxious, and ran, but bare was the road of those I sought; and night came down, and the wild beasts afoot, and I bemoaned my folly; also I was hungered. The moon rose clear and bright exceedingly, and presently a little way off the road I saw a tall windmill. 'Come,' said I, 'mayhap the miller will take ruth on me.'

"Near the mill was a haystack, and scattered about were store of little barrels; but lo! they were not flour-barrels, but tar-barrels, one or two, and the rest of spirits, Brant vein and Schiedam; I knew them momentarily, having seen the like in Holland.

"I knocked at the mill door, but none answered. I lifted the latch, and the door opened inwards. I went

in, and gladly, for the night was fine but cold, and a rime on the trees, which were a kind of lofty sycamores. There was a stove but black; I lighted it with some of the hay and wood, for there was a great pile of wood outside, and I know not how, I went to sleep. Not long had I slept, I trow, when hearing a noise, I awoke; and there were a dozen men around me, with wild faces, and long black hair, and black sparkling eyes."

Catherine. "Oh, my poor boy! those black-haired ones do still scare me to look on."

"I made my excuses in such Italian as I knew, and eking out by signs. They grinned. 'I had lost my company.' They grinned. 'I was an hungered.' Still they grinned, and spoke to one another in a tongue I knew not. At last one gave me a piece of bread and a tin mug of wine, as I thought, but it was spirits neat. I made a wry face and asked for water: then these wild men laughed a horrible laugh. I thought to fly, but looking towards the door, it was bolted with two enormous bolts of iron, and now first, as I ate my bread, I saw it was all guarded too, and ribbed with iron. My blood curdled within me, and yet I could not tell thee why; but hadst thou seen the faces, wild, stupid, and ruthless!

"I mumbled my bread, not to let them see I feared them; but oh, it cost me to swallow it and keep it in me. Then it whirled in my brain, was there no way to escape? Said I, 'They will not let me forth by the door; these be smugglers or robbers.' So I feigned drowsiness, and taking out two batzen said, 'Good men, for our Lady's grace let me lie on a bed and sleep, for I am faint with travel.' They nodded and grinned their horrible grin, and bade one light a lantern and lead me.

"He took me up a winding staircase, up, up, and I saw no windows, but the wooden walls were pierced like a barbican tower, and methinks for the same purpose, and through these slits I got glimpses of the sky, and thought, 'Shall I e'er see thee again?' He took me to the very top of the mill, and there was a room

with a heap of straw in one corner and many empty barrels, and by the wall a truckle bed. He pointed to it, and went downstairs heavily, taking the light, for in this room was a great window, and the moon came in bright.

"I looked out to see, and lo, it was so high that even the mill sails at their highest came not up to my window by some feet, but turned very slow and stately underneath, for wind there was scarce a breath; and the trees seemed silver filagree made by angel craftsmen. My hope of flight was gone.

"But now, those wild faces being out of sight, I smiled at my fears: what an if they were ill men, would it profit them to hurt me? Natheless, for caution against surprise, I would put the bed against the door. I went to move it, but could not. It was free at the head, but at the foot fast clamped with iron to the floor. So I flung my psaltery on the bed, but for myself made a layer of straw at the door, so as none could open on me unawares. And I laid my sword ready to my hand. And said my prayers for thee and me, and turned to sleep.

"Below they drank and made merry. And hearing this gave me confidence. Said I, 'Out of sight, out of mind. Another hour and the good Schiedam will make them forget that I am here.' And so I composed myself to sleep. And for some time could not for the boisterous mirth below. At last I dropped off. How long I slept I knew not; but I woke with a start: the noise had ceased below, and the sudden silence woke me. And scarce was I awake, when sudden the truckle bed was gone with a loud clang all but the feet, and the floor yawned, and I heard my psaltery fall and break to atoms, deep, deep, below the very floor of the mill. It had fallen into a well. And so had I done, lying where it lay."

Margaret shuddered and put her face in her hands. But speedily resumed.

"I lay stupefied at first. Then horror fell on me and I rose, but stood rooted there, shaking from head to foot. At last I found myself looking down into

that fearsome gap, and my very hair did bristle as I peered. And then, I remember, I turned quite calm, and made up my mind to die sword in hand. For I saw no man must know this their bloody secret and live. And I said, 'Poor Margaret!' And I took out of my bosom, where they lie ever, our marriage lines, and kissed them again and again. And I pinned them to my shirt again, that they might lie in one grave with me, if die I must. And I thought 'All our love and hopes to end thus!'"

Eli. "Whist all! Their marriage lines? Give her time! But no word. I can bear no chat. My poor lad!"

During the long pause that ensued Catherine leaned forward and passed something adroitly from her own lap under her daughter's apron who sat next her.

"Presently thinking, all in a whirl, of all that ever passed between us, and taking leave of all those pleasant hours, I called to mind how one day at Seven-bergen thou taughtest me to make a rope of straw. Mindest thou? The moment memory brought that happy day back to me, I cried out very loud: 'Margaret gives me a chance for life even here.'

"I woke from my lethargy. I seized on the straw and twisted it eagerly, as thou didst teach me, but my fingers trembled and delayed the task. Whiles I wrought I heard a door open below. That was a terrible moment. Even as I twisted my rope I got to the window and looked down at the great arms of the mill coming slowly up, then passing, then turning less slowly down, as it seemed: and I thought, 'They go not as when there is wind: yet, slow or fast, what man rid ever on such steed as these, and lived. Yet,' said I, 'better trust to them and God than to ill men.' And I prayed to Him whom even the wind obeyeth.

"Dear Margaret, I fastened my rope, and let myself gently down, and fixed my eye on that huge arm of the mill, which then was creeping up to me, and went to spring on to it. But my heart failed me at the pinch. And methought it was not near enow. And

it passed calm and awful by. I watched for another; they were three. And after a little while one crept up slower than the rest methought. And I with my foot thrust myself in good time somewhat out from the wall, and crying aloud 'Margaret!' did grip with all my soul the woodwork of the sail, and that moment was swimming in the air."

Giles. "Well done! well done!"

"Motion I felt little; but the stars seemed to go round the sky, and then the grass came up to me nearer and nearer, and when the hoary grass was quite close I was sent rolling along it as if hurled from a catapult, and got up breathless, and every point and tie about me broken. I rose, but fell down again in agony. I had but one leg I could stand on."

Catherine. "Eh! dear! his leg is broke, my boy's leg is broke."

"And e'en as I lay groaning, I heard a sound like thunder. It was the assassins running up the stairs. The crazy old mill shook under them. They must have found I had not fallen into their bloody trap, and were running to despatch me.

"Margaret, I felt no fear, for I had now no hope. I could neither run nor hide; so wild the place, so bright the moon. I struggled up all agony and revenge, more like some wounded wild beast than your Gerard. Leaning on my sword hilt I hobbled round; and swift as lightning, or vengeance, I heaped a great pile of their hay and wood at the mill door; then drove my dagger into a barrel of their smuggled spirits, and flung it on; then out with my tinder and lighted the pile. 'This will bring true men round my dead body,' said I. 'Aha!' I cried, 'think you I'll die alone, cowards, assassins! reckless fiends!' and at each word on went a barrel pierced.

"But oh, Margaret! the fire fed by the spirits surprised me: it shot up and singed my very hair, it went roaring up the side of the mill, swift as falls the lightning; and I yelled and laughed in my torture and

despair, and pierced more barrels, and the very tar-barrels, and flung them on. The fire roared like a lion for its prey, and voices answered it inside from the top of the mill, and the feet came thundering down, and I stood as near that awful fire as I could, with uplifted sword to slay and be slain. The bolt was drawn. A tar-barrel caught fire. The door was opened. What followed? Not the men came out, but the fire rushed in at them like a living death, and the first I thought to fight with was blackened and crumpled on the floor like a leaf. One fearsome yell, and dumb for ever. The feet ran up again, but fewer. I heard them hack with their swords a little way up at the mill's wooden sides; but they had no time to hew their way out: the fire and reek were at their heels, and the smoke burst out at every loophole, and oozed blue in the moonlight through each crevice. I hobbled back, racked with pain and fury. There were white faces up at my window. They saw me. They cursed me. I cursed them back and shook my naked sword: 'Come down the road I came,' I cried. 'But ye must come one by one, and as ye come, ye die upon this steel.' Some cursed at that, but others wailed. For I had them all at deadly vantage. And doubtless, with my smoke-grimed face and fiendish rage, I looked a demon.

"And now there was a steady roar inside the mill. The flame was going up it as furnace up its chimney. The mill caught fire. Fire glimmered through it. Tongues of flame darted through each loophole and shot sparks and fiery flakes into the night. One of the assassins leaped on to the sail, as I had done. In his hurry he missed his grasp and fell at my feet, and bounded from the hard ground like a ball, and never spoke, nor moved again. And the rest screamed like women, and with their despair came back to me both ruth for them and hope of life for myself. And the fire gnawed through the mill in placent, and shot forth showers of great flat sparks like flakes of fiery snow; and the sails caught fire one after another; and I became a man again and staggered away terror-stricken, leaning on my

sword, from the sight of my revenge, and with great bodily pain crawled back to the road. And, dear Margaret, the rimy trees were now all like pyramids of golden filagree, and lace, cobweb fine, in the red fire-light. Oh! most beautiful! And a poor wretch got entangled in the burning sails, and whirled round screaming, and lost hold at the wrong time, and hurled like stone from mangonel high into the air; then a dull thump; it was his carcass striking the earth. The next moment there was a loud crash.

"The mill fell in on its destroyer, and a million great sparks flew up, and the sails fell over the burning wreck, and at that a million more sparks flew up, and the ground was strewn with burning wood and men. I prayed God forgive me, and kneeling with my back to that fiery shambles, I saw lights on the road; a welcome sight. It was a company coming towards me, and scarce two furlongs off. I hobbled towards them. Ere I had gone far I heard a swift step behind me. I turned. One had escaped; how escaped, who can divine? His sword shone in the moonlight. I feared him. Methought the ghosts of all those dead sat on that glittering glaive. I put my other foot to the ground, maugre the anguish, and fled towards the torches, moaning with pain, and shouting for aid. But what could I do? He gained on me. Behooved me turn and fight.

"Denys had taught me sword play in sport. I wheeled, our swords clashed. His clothes they smelled all singed. I cut swiftly upward with supple hand, and his dangled bleeding at the wrist, and his sword fell; it tinkled on the ground. I raised my sword to hew him should he stoop for't. He stood and cursed me. He drew his dagger with his left; I opposed my point and dared him with my eye to close. A great shout arose behind me from true men's throats. He started. He spat at me in his rage, then gnashed his teeth and fled blaspheming. I turned and saw torches close at hand. Lo, they fell to dancing up and down methought, and the next-moment—all—was—dark. I had—ah!"

Catherine. "Here, help! water! Stand aloof, you that be men!"

Margaret had fainted away.

XVII.

WHEN she recovered, her head was on Catherine's arm, and the honest half of the family she had invaded like a foe stood round her uttering rough homely words of encouragement, especially Giles, who roared at her that she was not to take on like that.

"Gerard was alive and well, or he could not have writ this letter, the biggest mankind had seen as yet, and," as he thought, "the beautifullest, and most moving, and smallest writ."

"Ay, good Master Giles," sighed Margaret feebly, "he *was* alive. But how know I what hath since befallen him? Oh, why left he Holland to go among strangers fierce as lions? And why did I not drive him from me sooner than part him from his own flesh and blood? Forgive me, you that are his mother!"

And she gently removed Catherine's arm, and made a feeble attempt to slide off the chair on to her knees, which, after a brief struggle with superior force, ended in her finding herself on Catherine's bosom.

Then Margaret held out the letter to Eli, and said faintly but sweetly, "I will trust it from my hand now. In sooth, I am little fit to read any more—and—and—loath to leave my comfort;" and she wreathed her other arm round Catherine's neck.

"Read thou, Richard," said Eli; "thine eyes be younger than mine."

Richard took the letter. "Well," said he, "such writing saw I never. A writeth with a needle's point; and clear to boot. Why is he not in my counting-house at Amsterdam instead of vagabonding it out yonder!"

"When I came to myself I was seated in the litter, and my good merchant holding of my hand. I babbled I know not what, and then shuddered awhile in silence. He put a horn of wine to my lips."

Catherine. "Bless him! bless him!"

Eli. "Whist!"

"And I told him what had befallen. He would see my leg. It was sprained sore, and swelled at the ankle; and all my points were broken, as I could scarce keep up my hose, and I said—

"'Sir, I shall be but a burden to you, I doubt, and can make you no harmony now; my poor psaltery it is broken;' and I did grieve over my broken music, companion of so many weary leagues.

"But he patted me on the cheek, and bade me not fret; also he did put up my leg on a pillow, and tended me like a kind father.

"*January 19.*—I sit all day in the litter, for we are pushing forward with haste, and at night the good, kind merchant sendeth me to bed, and will not let me work. Strange! whene'er I fall in with men like fiends, then the next moment God still sendeth me some good man or woman, lest I should turn away from human kind.

"Oh, Margaret! how strangely mixed they be, and how old I am by what I was three months agone! And lo! if good Master Fugger hath not been and bought me a psaltery."

Catherine. "Eli, my man, an yon merchant comes our way let us buy a hundred ells of cloth of him, and not higgle."

Eli. "That will I, take your oath on't!"

"*January 20.*—Laid up in the litter, and as good as blind, but halting to bait, Lombardy plains burst on me. Oh, Margaret! a land flowing with milk and honey; all sloping plains, goodly rivers, jocund meadows, delectable orchards, and blooming gardens; and though winter, looks warmer than poor beloved Holland at midsummer, and makes the wanderer's face to shine, and his heart to leap for joy to see earth so kind and smiling. Here be vines, cedars, olives, and cattle plenty, but three goats to a sheep. The draught oxen wear white linen on their necks, and standing by

dark green olive-trees each one is a picture; and the folk, especially women, wear delicate strawen hats with flowers and leaves fairly imitated in silk, with silver mixed.

"This day we crossed a river prettily in a chained ferryboat. On either bank was a windlass, and a single man by turning of it drew our whole company to his shore, whereat I did admire, being a stranger. Passed over with us some country folk. And an old woman looking at a young wench, she did hide her face with her hand, and held her crucifix out like knight his sword in tourney, dreading the evil eye.

"*January 25.*—Safe at Venice. A place whose strange and passing beauty is well known to thee by report of our mariners. Dost mind, too, how Peter would oft fill our ears withal, we handed beneath the table, and he still discoursing of this sea-enthroned and peerless city, in shape of a bow, and its great canal and palaces on piles, and its watery ways plied by scores of gilded boats; and that market-place of nations, *orbis non urbis forum*, St. Mark his place? And his statue with the peerless jewels in his eyes, and the lion at his gate? But I, lying at my window in pain, may see none of these beauties as yet, but only a street, fairly paved, which is dull, and houses with oiled paper and linen, in lieu of glass, which is rude; and the passers-by, their habits and their gestures, wherein they are superfluous. Therefore, not to miss my daily comfort of whispering to thee, I will e'en turn mine eyes inward, and bind my sheaves of wisdom reaped by travel. For I love thee so, that no treasure pleases me not shared with thee; and what treasure so good and enduring as knowledge?

"*January 26.*—Sweetheart, I must be brief, and tell thee but a part of that I have seen, for this day my journal ends. To-night it sails for thee, and I, unhappy, not with it, but to-morrow, in another ship, to Rome.

"Dear Margaret, I took a hand litter, and was

carried to St. Mark his church. Outside it, towards the market-place, is a noble gallery, and above it four famous horses, cut in brass by the ancient Romans, and seem all moving, and at the very next step must needs leap down on the beholder.

"And after this they took me to the quay, and presently I espied among the masts one garlanded with amaranth flowers. 'Take me thither,' said I, and I let my guide know the custom of our Dutch skippers to hoist flowers to the masthead when they are courting a maid. Oft had I scoffed at this saying, 'So then his wooing is the earth's concern.' But now, so far from the Rotter, that bunch at a masthead made my heart leap with assurance of a countryman. They carried me, and oh, Margaret! on the stern of that Dutch hoy, was writ in muckle letters—

RICHART ELIASOEN, AMSTERDAM.

'Put me down,' I said; 'for our Lady's sake put me down.'

"I sat on the bank and looked, scarce believing my eyes, and looked, and presently fell to crying, till I could see the words no more. Ah me, how they went to my heart, those bare letters in a foreign land.

"Dear Richart! good, kind brother Richart! often I have sat on his knee and rid on his back. Kisses many he has given me, unkind word from him had I never. And there was his name on his own ship, and his face and all his grave, but good and gentle ways, came back to me, and I sobbed vehemently, and cried aloud, 'Why, why is not brother Richart here, and not his name only?'

"I spake in Dutch, for my heart was too full to hold their foreign tongues, and——"

El. "Well, Richart, go on, lad, prithee go on. Is this a place to halt at?"

Richart. "Father, with my duty to you, it is easy to say go on, but think ye I am not flesh and blood? The poor boy's—simple grief and brotherly love coming—so sudden—on me, they go through my heart and—

I cannot go on; sink me if I can even see the words, 'tis writ so fine."

Denys. "Courage, good Master Richart! Take your time. Here are more eyne wet than yours. Ah, little comrade! would God thou wert here, and I at Venice for thee."

Richart. "Poor little curly-headed lad, what had he done that we have driven him so far?"

"That is what I would fain know," said Catherine drily, then fell to weeping and rocking herself, with her apron over her head.

"Kind dame, good friends," said Margaret, trembling, "let me tell you how the letter ends. The skipper hearing our Gerard speak his grief in Dutch, accosted him, and spake comfortably to him; and after a while our Gerard found breath to say he was worthy Master Richart's brother. Thereat was the good skipper all agog to serve him."

Richart. "So! so! skipper! Master Richart afore-said will be at thy wedding and bring's purse to boot." ↴

Margaret. "Sir, he told Gerard of his consort that was to sail that very night for Rotterdam; and dear Gerard had to go home and finish his letter and bring it to the ship. And the rest, it is but his poor dear words of love to me, the which, an't please you, I think shame to hear them read aloud, and ends with the lines I sent to Mistress Kate, and *they* would sound so harsh *now* and ungrateful."

The pleading tone, as much as the words, prevailed, and Richart said he would read no more aloud, but run his eye over it for his own brotherly satisfaction. She blushed and looked uneasy, but made no reply.

"Eli," said Catherine, still sobbing a little, "tell me, for our Lady's sake, how our poor boy is to live at that nasty Rome. He is gone there to write, but here be his own words to prove writing avails nought: a had died o' hunger by the way but for paint-brush and psaltery. Well-a-day!"

"Well," said Eli, "he has got brush and music still. Besides, so many men so many minds. Writing, thof

it had no sale in other parts, may be merchandise at Rome."

"Father," said little Kate, "have I your good leave to put in my word 'twixt mother and you?"

"And welcome, little heart."

"Then, seems to me, painting and music, close at hand, be stronger than writing, but being distant, nought to compare; for see what glamour written paper hath done here but now. Our Gerard, writing at Venice, hath verily put his hand into this room at Rotterdam, and turned all our hearts. Ay, dear, dear Gerard, methinks thy spirit hath rid hither on these thy paper wings; and oh! dear father, why not do as we should do were he here in the body?"

"Kate," said Eli, "fear not; Richart and I will give him glamour for glamour. We will write him a letter, and send it to Rome by a sure hand with money, and bid him home on the instant."

Cornelis and Sybrandt exchanged a gloomy look.

"Ah, good father! And meantime?"

"Well, meantime?"

"Dear father, dear mother, what can we do to pleasure the absent, but be kind to his poor lass; and her own trouble afore her?"

"'Tis well!" said Eli; "but I am older than thou."

Then he turned gravely to Margaret—

"Wilt answer me a question, my pretty mistress?"

"If I may, sir," faltered Margaret.

"What are these marriage lines Gerard speaks of in the letter?"

"Our marriage lines, sir. His and mine. Know you not we are betrothed?"

"Before witnesses?"

"Ay, sure. My poor father and Martin Wittenhaagen."

"This is the first I ever heard of it. How came they in his hands? They should be in yours."

"Alas, sir, the more is my grief; but I ne'er doubted him; and he said it was a comfort to him to have them in his bosom."

"Y'are a very foolish lass."

XVIII.

HE had little to do now, and no princess to draw, so he set himself resolutely to read that deed of Floris Brandt, from which he had hitherto been driven by the abominably bad writing. He mastered it, and saw at once that the loan on this land must have been paid over and over again by the rents, and that Ghysbrecht was keeping Peter Brandt out of his own.

"Fool! not to have read this before," he cried. He hired a horse and rode down to the nearest port. A vessel was to sail for Amsterdam in four days.

He took a passage; and paid a small sum to secure it.

"The land is too full of cut-throats for me," said he; "and 'tis lovely fair weather for the sea. Our Dutch skippers are not shipwrecked like these bungling Italians."

When he returned home there sat his old landlady with her eyes sparkling.

"You are in luck, my young master," said she. "All the fish run to your net this day methinks. See what a lackey hath brought to our house! This bill and this bag."

Gerard broke the seals, and found it full of silver crowns.

The letter contained a mere slip of paper with this line, cut out of some MS:

"La lingua non ha osso, ma fa rompere il dosso."

"Fear me not!" said Gerard aloud. "I'll keep mine between my teeth."

"What is that?"

"Oh, nothing. Am I not happy, dame? I am going back to my sweetheart with money in one pocket, and land in the other." And he fell to dancing round her.

"Well," said she, "I trow nothing could make you happier."

"Nothing, except to be there."

"Well, that is a pity, for I thought to make you a little happier with a letter from Holland."

"A letter? for me? where? how? who brought it? Oh, dame!"

"A stranger; a painter, with a reddish face and an outlandish name; Anselmin, I trow."

"Hans Memling? a friend of mine. God bless him!"

"Ay, that is it; Anselmin. He could scarce speak a word, but a had the wit to name thee; and a puts the letter down, and a nods and smiles, and I nods and smiles, and gives him a pint o' wine, and it went down him like a spoonful."

"That is Hans, honest Hans. Oh, dame, I am in luck to-day; but I deserve it. For, I care not if I tell you, I have just overcome a great temptation for dear Margaret's sake."

"Who is she?"

"Nay, I'd have my tongue cut out sooner than betray her, but oh, it *was* a temptation. Gratitude pushing me wrong; Beauty almost divine pulling me wrong: curses, reproaches, and hardest of all to resist, gentle tears from eyes used to command. Sure some saint helped me; Anthony belike. But my reward is come."

"Ay, is it, lad; and no farther off than my pocket. Come out, Gerard's reward," and she brought a letter out of her capacious pocket.

Gerard threw his arm round her neck and hugged her.

"My best friend," said he, "my second mother, I'll read it to you."

"Ay, do, do."

"Alas! it is not from Margaret. This is not her hand." And he turned it about.

"Alack; but maybe her bill is within. The lasses are aye for gliding in their bills under cover of another hand."

"True. Whose hand is this? sure I have seen it. I trow 'tis my dear friend the demoiselle Van Eyck. Oh, then Margaret's bill *will* be inside." He tore it open. "Nay, 'tis all in one writing. 'Gerard, my well beloved son' (she never called me that before

that I mind), 'this letter brings thee heavy news from one would liever send thee joyful tidings. Know that Margaret Brandt died in these arms on Thursday sennight last.' (What does the doting old woman mean by that?) 'The last word on her lips was "Gerard," she said, "Tell him I prayed for him at my last hour; and bid him pray for me." She died very comfortable, and I saw her laid in the earth, for her father was useless, as you shall know. So no more at present from her that is with sorrowing heart thy loving friend and servant,

MARGARET VAN EYCK.'

"Ay, that is her signature sure enough. Now what d'ye think of that, dame?" cried Gerard with a grating laugh. "There is a pretty letter to send to a poor fellow so far from home. But it is Reicht Heynes I blame for humouring the old woman and letting her do it; as for the old woman herself, she dotes, she has lost her head, she is fourscore. Oh, my heart, I'm choking. For all that she ought to be locked up, or her hands tied. Say this had come to a fool; say I was idiot enough to believe this; know ye what I should do? run to the top of the highest church tower in Rome and fling myself off it, cursing Heaven. Woman! woman! what are you doing?" And he seized her rudely by the shoulder. "What are ye weeping for?" he cried, in a voice all unlike his own, and loud and hoarse as a raven. "Would ye scald me to death with your tears? She believes it. She believes it. Ah! ah! ah! ah! ah! ah!—Then there is no God."

The poor woman sighed and rocked herself.

"And must I be the one to bring it thee all smiling and smirking? I could kill myself for't. Death spares none," she sobbed. "Death spares none."

Gerard staggered against the window sill.

"But He is master of death," he groaned. "Or they have taught me a lie. I begin to fear there is no God, and the saints are but dead bones, and hell is master of the world. My pretty Margaret; my sweet,

my loving Margaret. The best daughter! the truest lover! the pride of Holland! the darling of the world! It is a lie. Where is this caitiff Hans? I'll hunt him round the town. I'll cram his murdering falsehood down his throat."

And he seized his hat and ran furiously about the streets for hours.

Towards sunset he came back white as a ghost. He had not found Memling; but his poor mind had had time to realise the woman's simple words, that Death spares none.

He crept into the house bent, and feeble as an old man, and refused all food. Nor would he speak, but sat, white, with great staring eyes, muttering at intervals, "There is no God."

Alarmed both on his account and on her own (for he looked a desperate maniac), his landlady ran for her aunt.

The good dame came, and the two women braver together, sat one on each side of him, and tried to soothe him with kind and consoling voices. But he heeded them no more than the chairs they sat on. Then the younger held a crucifix out before him, to aid her. "Maria, mother of heaven, comfort him," they sighed. But he sat glaring, deaf to all external sounds.

Presently, without any warning, he jumped up, struck the crucifix rudely out of his way with a curse, and made a headlong dash at the door. The poor women shrieked. But ere he reached the door, something seemed to them to draw him up straight by his hair, and twirl him round like a top. He whirled twice round with arms extended; then fell like a dead log upon the floor, with blood trickling from his nostrils and ears.

XIX.

GERARD returned to consciousness and to despair.

On the second day he was raving with fever on the brain. On a table hard by lay his rich auburn hair, long as a woman's.

The deadlier symptoms succeeded one another rapidly.

On the fifth day his leech retired and gave him up.

On the sunset of that same day he fell into a deep sleep.

Some said he would wake only to die.

But an old gossip, whose opinion carried weight (she had been a professional nurse), declared that his youth might save him yet, could he sleep twelve hours.

On this his old landlady cleared the room and watched him alone. She vowed a wax candle to the Virgin for every hour he should sleep.

He slept twelve hours.

The good soul rejoiced, and thanked the Virgin on her knees.

He slept twenty-four hours.

His kind nurse began to doubt. At the thirtieth hour she sent for the woman of art.

"Thirty hours! shall we wake him?"

The other inspected him closely for some time.

"His breath is even, his hand moist. I know there be learned leeches would wake him, to look at his tongue, and be none the wiser; but we that be women should have the sense to let bon Nature alone. When did sleep ever harm the racked brain or the torn heart?"

When he had been forty-eight hours asleep, it got wind, and they had much ado to keep the curious out. But they admitted only Fra Colonna and his friend the gigantic Fra Jerome.

These two relieved the women, and sat silent: the former eyeing his young friend with tears in his eyes, the latter with beads in his hand looked as calmly on him as he had on the sea when Gerard and he encountered it hand to hand.

At last, I think it was about the sixtieth hour of this strange sleep, the landlady touched Fra Colonna with her elbow. He looked. Gerard had opened his eyes as gently as if he had been but dozing.

He stared.

He drew himself up a little in bed.

He put his hand to his head, and found his hair was gone.

He noticed his friend Colonna, and smiled with pleasure. But in the middle of smiling his face stopped, and was convulsed in a moment with anguish unspeakable, and he uttered a loud cry, and turned his face to the wall.

His good landlady wept at this. She had known what it is to awake bereaved.

Fra Jerome recited canticles, and prayers from his breviary.

Gerard rolled himself in the bed-clothes.

Fra Colonna went to him, and whimpering, reminded him that all was not lost. The divine Muses were immortal. He must transfer his affection to them; they would never betray him nor fail him like creatures of clay. The good, simple father then hurried away; for he was overcome by his emotion.

Fra Jerome remained behind.

"Young man," said he, "the Muses exist but in the brains of pagans and visionaries. The Church alone gives repose to the heart on earth, and happiness to the soul hereafter. Hath earth deceived thee, hath passion broken thy heart after tearing it, the Church opens her arms: consecrate thy gifts to her! The Church is peace of mind."

He spoke these words solemnly at the door, and was gone as soon as they were uttered.

"The Church!" cried Gerard, rising furiously, and shaking his fist after the friar. "Malediction on the Church! But for the Church I should not lie broken here, and she lie cold, cold, cold, in Holland. Oh, my Margaret! oh, my darling! my darling! And I must run from thee the few months thou hadst to live. Cruel! cruel! The monsters, they let her die. Death comes not without some signs. These the blind, selfish wretches saw not, or recked not; but I had seen them, I that love her. Oh, had I been there, I had saved her, I had saved her. Idiot! idiot! to leave her for a moment."

He wept bitterly a long time.

XX.

In the guest chamber of a Dominican convent lay a single stranger, exhausted by successive and violent fits of nausea, which had at last subsided, leaving him almost as weak as Margaret lay that night in Holland.

A huge wood fire burned on the hearth, and beside it hung the patient's clothes.

A gigantic friar sat by his bedside, reading pious collects aloud from his breviary.

The patient at times eyed him, and seemed to listen : at others closed his eyes and moaned.

The monk kneeled down with his face touching the ground and prayed for him : then rose and bade him farewell. "Day breaks," said he; "I must prepare for matins."

"Good Father Jerome, before you go, how came I hither?"

"By the hand of Heaven. You flung away God's gift. He bestowed it on you again. Think on it! Hast tried the world and found its gall. Now try the Church! The Church is peace. Pax vobiscum."

He was gone. Gerard lay back, meditating and wondering, till weak and wearied he fell into a doze.

When he awoke again he found a new nurse seated beside him. It was a layman, with an eye as small and restless as Friar Jerome's was calm and majestic.

The man inquired earnestly how he felt.

"Very, very weak. Where have I seen you before messer?"

"None the worse for my gauntlet?" inquired the other with considerable anxiety; "I was fain to strike you withal, or both you and I should be at the bottom of Tiber."

Gerard stared at him. "What, 'twas you saved me? How?"

"Well, signor, I was by the banks of Tiber on—on—an errand, no matter what. You came to me and begged hard for a dagger stroke. But ere I could oblige you, ay, even as you spoke to me, I knew you

for the signor that saved my wife and child upon the sea."

"It is Teresa's husband. And an assassin?"

"At your service. Well, Ser Gerard, the next thing was, you flung yourself into Tiber, and bade me hold aloof."

"I remember that."

"Had it been any but you, believe me I had obeyed you, and not wagged a finger. Men are my foes. They may all hang on one rope, or drown in one river for me. But when thou, sinking in Tiber, didst cry 'Margaret!'"

"Ah!"

"My heart it cried 'Teresa!' How could I go home and look her in the face, did I let thee die, and by the very death thou savedst her from? So in I went; and luckily for us both I swim like a duck. You, seeing me near, and being bent on destruction, tried to grip me, and so end us both. But I swam round thee, and (receive my excuses) so buffeted thee on the nape of the neck with my steel glove, that thou lost sense, and I with much ado, the stream being strong, did draw thy body to land, but insensible and full of water. Then I took thee on my back and made for my own home. 'Teresa will nurse him, and be pleased with me,' thought I. But hard by this monastery, a holy friar, the biggest e'er I saw, met us and asked the matter. So I told him. He looked hard at thee. 'I know the face,' quoth he. 'Tis one Gerard, a fair youth from Holland.' 'The same,' quo' I. Then said his reverence, 'He hath friends among our brethren. Leave him with us! Charity, it is our office.'

"Also he told me they of the convent had better means to tend thee than I had. And that was true enow. So I just bargained to be let in to see thee once a day, and here thou art."

And the miscreant cast a strange look of affection and interest upon Gerard.

Gerard did not respond to it. He felt as if a snake were in the room. He closed his eyes.

"Ah, thou wouldst sleep," said the miscreant eagerly.

"I go." And he retired on tip-toe with a promise to come every day.

Gerard lay with his eyes closed: not asleep, but deeply pondering.

Saved from death, by an assassin!

Was not this the finger of Heaven?

Of that Heaven he had insulted, cursed, and defied.

He shuddered at his blasphemies. He tried to pray.

He found he could utter prayers. But he could not pray.

"I am doomed eternally," he cried, "doomed, doomed."

The organ of the convent church burst on his ear in rich and solemn harmony.

Then rose the voices of the choir chanting a full service.

Among them was one that seemed to hover above the others, and tower towards heaven; a sweet boy's voice, full, pure, angelic.

He closed his eyes and listened. The days of his own boyhood flowed back upon him in those sweet, pious harmonies. No earthly dross there, no foul, fierce passions, rending and corrupting the soul.

Peace, peace; sweet, balmy peace.

"Ay," he sighed, "the Church is peace of mind. Till I left her bosom I ne'er knew sorrow, nor sin."

And the poor torn, worn creature wept.

And even as he wept, there beamed on him the sweet and reverend face of one he had never thought to see again. It was the face of Father Anselm.

The good father had only reached the convent the night before last. Gerard recognised him in a moment, and cried to him—

"Oh, Father Anselm, you cured my wounded body in Juliers: now cure my hurt soul in Rome! Alas, you cannot."

Anselm sat down by the bedside, and putting a gentle hand on his head, first calmed him with a soothing word or two.

He then (for he had learned how Gerard came there) spoke to him kindly but solemnly, and made him feel

his crime, and urged him to repentance, and gratitude to that Divine Power which had thwarted his will to save his soul.

"Come, my son," said he, "first purge thy bosom of its load."

"Ah, father," said Gerard, "in Juliers I could; then I was innocent; but now, impious monster that I am, I dare not confess to you."

"Why not, my son? Thinkest thou I have not sinned against heaven in my time, and deeply? oh, how deeply! Come, poor laden soul, pour forth thy grief, pour forth thy faults, hold back nought! Lie not oppressed and crushed by hidden sins."

And soon Gerard was at Father Anselm's knees confessing his every sin with sighs and groans of penitence.

"Thy sins are great," said Anselm. "Thy temptation also was great, terribly great. I must consult our good prior."

The good Anselm kissed his brow, and left him, to consult the superior as to his penance.

And lo! Gerard could pray now.

And he prayed with all his heart.

The phase, through which this remarkable mind now passed, may be summed in a word—Penitence.

He turned with terror and aversion from the world, and begged passionately to remain in the convent. To him, convent nurtured, it was like a bird returning wounded, wearied to its gentle nest. He passed his novitiate in prayer, and mortification, and pious reading and meditation.

XXI.

THE sermon had begun when Margaret entered the great church of St. Laurens. It was a huge edifice, far from completed. Churches were not built in a year. The side aisles were roofed, but not the mid aisle nor

the chancel; the pillars and arches were pretty perfect, and some of them whitewashed. But only one window in the whole church was glazed; the rest were at present great jagged openings in the outer walls.

But to-day all these uncouth imperfections made the church beautiful. It was a glorious summer afternoon, and the sunshine came broken into marvellous forms through those irregular openings, and played bewitching pranks upon so many broken surfaces.

It streamed through the gaping walls, and clove the dark cool side aisles with rivers of glory, and dazzled and glowed on the white pillars beyond.

And nearly the whole central aisle was chequered with light and shade in broken outlines; the shades seeming cooler and more soothing than ever shade was, and the lights like patches of amber diamond, animated with heavenly fire. And above, from west to east the blue sky vaulted the lofty aisle, and seemed quite close.

The sunny caps of the women made a sea of white, contrasting exquisitely with that vivid vault of blue.

For the mid aisle, huge as it was, was crammed, yet quite still. The words and the mellow, gentle earnest voice of the preacher held them mute.

Margaret stood spellbound at the beauty, the devotion, "the great calm." She got behind a pillar in the north aisle; and there, though she could hardly catch a word, a sweet devotional languor crept over her at the loveliness of the place and the preacher's musical voice; and balmy oil seemed to trickle over the waves in her heart and smooth them. So she leaned against the pillar with eyes half closed, and all seemed soft and dreamy. She felt it good to be there.

Presently she saw a lady leave an excellent place opposite to get out of the sun, which was indeed pouring on her head from the window. Margaret went round softly but swiftly; and was fortunate enough to get the place. She was now beside a pillar of the south aisle, and not above fifty feet from the preacher. She was at his side, a little behind him, but could hear every word.

Her attention, however, was soon distracted by the shadow of a man's head and shoulders bobbing up and down so drolly she had some ado to keep from smiling. Yet it was nothing essentially droll.

It was the sexton digging.

She found that out in a moment by looking behind her, through the window, to whence the shadow came.

Now as she was looking at Jorian Ketel digging, suddenly a tone of the preacher's voice fell upon her ear and her mind so distinctly, it seemed literally to strike her, and make her vibrate inside and out.

Her hand went to her bosom, so strange and sudden was the thrill. Then she turned round, and looked at the preacher. His back was turned, and nothing visible but his tonsure. She sighed. That tonsure, being all she saw, contradicted the tone effectually.

Yet she now leaned a little forward with downcast eyes, hoping for that accent again. It did not come. But the whole voice grew strangely upon her. It rose and fell as the preacher warmed; and it seemed to waken faint echoes of a thousand happy memories. She would not look to dispel the melancholy pleasure this voice gave her.

Presently, in the middle of an eloquent period, the preacher stopped.

She almost sighed; a soothing music had ended. Could the sermon be ended already? No; she looked round; the people did not move.

A good many faces seemed now to turn her way. She looked behind her sharply. There was nothing there.

Startled countenances near her now eyed the preacher. She followed their looks; and there, in the pulpit, was a face as of a staring corpse. The friar's eyes, naturally large, and made larger by the thinness of his cheeks, were dilated to supernatural size, and glaring her way out of a bloodless face.

She cringed and turned fearfully round: for she thought there *must* be some terrible thing near her. No; there was nothing; she was the outside figure of the listening crowd.

At this moment the church fell into commotion. Figures got up all over the building, and craned forward; agitated faces by hundreds gazed from the friar to Margaret, and from Margaret to the friar. The turning to and fro of so many caps made a loud rustle. Then came shrieks of nervous women, and buzzing of men; and Margaret, seeing so many eyes levelled at her, shrank terrified behind the pillar, with one scared, hurried glance at the preacher.

Momentary as that glance was, it caught in that stricken face an expression that made her shiver.

She turned faint, and sat down on a heap of chips the workmen had left, and buried her face in her hands. The sermon went on again. She heard the sound of it; but not the sense. She tried to think, but her mind was in a whirl. Thought would fix itself in no shape but this: that on that prodigy-stricken face she had seen a look stamped. And the recollection of that look now made her quiver from head to foot.

For that look was—Recognition.

The sermon, after wavering some time, ended in a strain of exalted, nay, feverish eloquence, that went far to make the crowd forget the preacher's strange pause and ghastly glare.

Margaret mingled hastily with the crowd, and went out of the church with them.

XXII.

ONE night, a beautiful clear frosty night, he came back to his cell, after a short rest. The stars were wonderful. Heaven seemed a thousand times larger as well as brighter than earth, and to look with a thousand eyes instead of one.

"Oh, wonderful," he cried, "that there should be men who do crimes by night; and others, scarce less mad, who live for this little world, and not for that great and glorious one, which nightly, to all eyes not blinded by custom, reveals its glowing glories. Thank God I am a hermit."

And in this mood he came to his cell door.

He paused at it; it was closed.

"Why, methought I left it open," said he. "The wind: there is not a breath of wind: what means this?"

He stood with his hand upon the rugged door. He looked through one of the great chinks, for it was much smaller in places than the aperture it pretended to close, and saw his little oil wick burning just where he had left it.

"How is it with me," he sighed, "when I start and tremble at nothing? Either I did shut it, or the fiend hath shut it after me to disturb my happy soul. Retro Sathanas!"

And he entered his cave rapidly, and began with somewhat nervous expedition to light one of his largest tapers. While he was lighting it, there was a soft sigh in the cave.

He started and dropped the candle just as it was lighting, and it went out.

He stooped for it hurriedly and lighted it, listening intently. When it was lighted he shaded it with his hand from behind, and threw the faint light all round the cell.

In the farthest corner the outline of the wall seemed broken.

He took a step towards the place with his heart beating.

The candle at the same time getting brighter, he saw it was the figure of a woman.

Another step with his knees knocking together.

It was Margaret Brandt.

XXIII.

MARGARET flew towards the hermitage as noiselessly as a lapwing. Arrived near it, she crouched, and there was something truly serpentine in the gliding, flexible, noiseless movements by which she reached

the very door, and there she found a chink, and listened. And often it caused her a struggle not to burst in upon them; but warned by defeat, she was cautious, and resolute to let well alone. And after a while, slowly and noiselessly she reared her head, like a snake its crest, to where she saw the broadest chink of all, and looked with all her eyes and soul, as well as listened.

The little boy then being asked whether he had no daddy, at first shook his head, and would say nothing; but being pressed he suddenly seemed to remember something, and said he, "Dad—da ill man; run away and leave poor mum—ma."

She who heard this winced. It was as new to her as to Clement. Some interfering foolish woman had gone and said this to the boy, and now out it came in Gerard's very face. His answer surprised her; he burst out, "The villain! the monster! he must be born without bowels to desert thee, sweet one. Ah! he little knows the joy he hath turned his back on. Well, my little dove, I must be father and mother to thee, since the one runs away, and t'other abandons thee to my care. Now to-morrow I shall ask the good people that bring me my food to fetch some nice eggs and milk for thee as well; for bread is good enough for poor old good-for-nothing me, but not for thee. And I shall teach thee to read."

"I can yead, I can yead."

"Ay, verily, so young? all the better; we will read good books together, and I shall show thee the way to heaven. Heaven is a beautiful place, a thousand times fairer and better than earth, and there be little cherubs like thyself, in white, glad to welcome thee and love thee. Wouldst like to go to heaven one day?"

"Ay, along wi'—my—mammy."

"What, not without her then?"

"Nay. I ont my mammy. Where is my mammy?"

(Oh! what it cost poor Margaret not to burst in and clasp him to her heart.)

"Well, fret not, sweetheart, mayhap she will come

when thou art asleep. Wilt thou be good now and sleep?"

"I not eepy. Ikes to talk."

"Well, talk we then; tell me thy pretty name."

"Baby. And he opened his eyes with amazement at this great hulking creature's ignorance.

"Hast none other?"

"Nay."

"What shall I do to pleasure thee, baby? Shall I tell thee a story?"

"I ikes tories," said the boy, clapping his hands.

"Or sing thee a song?"

"I ikes tongs," and he became excited.

"Choose then, a song or a story."

"Ting I a tong. Nay, tell I a tory. Nay, ting I a tong. Nay—" And the corners of his little mouth turned down and he had half a mind to weep because he could not have both, and could not tell which to forego. Suddenly his little face cleared: "Ting I a tory," said he.

"Sing thee a story, baby? Well, after all, why not? And wilt thou sit o' my knee and hear it?"

"Yea."

"Then I must e'en doff this breastplate. 'Tis too hard for thy soft cheek. So. And now I must doff this bristly cilice; they would prick thy tender skin, perhaps make it bleed, as they have me, I see. So. And now I put on my best pelisse, in honour of thy worshipful visit. See how soft and warm it is; bless the good soul that sent it; and now I sit me down; so. And I take thee on my left knee, and put my arm under thy little head; so. And then the psaltery. and play a little tune; so, not too loud."

"I ikes dat."

"I am right glad on't. Now list the story."

He chanted a child's story in a sort of recitative, singing a little moral refrain now and then. The boy listened with rapture.

"I ikes oo," said he. "Ot is oo? is oo a man?"

"Ay, little heart, and a great sinner to boot."

"I ikes great tingers. Ting one other tory."

Story No. 2 was chanted.

"I ubbs oo," cried the child impetuously. "Ot caft ¹ is oo?"

"I am a hermit, love."

"I ubbs vermins. Ting other one."

But during this final performance, Nature suddenly held out her leaden sceptre over the youthful eyelids.

"I is not eepy," whined he very faintly, and succumbed.

Clement laid down his psalter softly and began to rock his new treasure in his arms, and to crone over him a little lullaby well known in Tergou, with which his own mother had often set him off.

And the child sank into a profound sleep upon his arm. And he stopped croning, and gazed on him with infinite tenderness, yet sadness; for at that moment he could not help thinking what might have been but for a piece of paper with a lie in it.

He sighed deeply.

The next moment the moonlight burst into his cell, and with it, and in it, and almost as swift as it, Margaret Brandt was down at his knee with a timorous hand upon his shoulder.

"Gerard, you do not reject us. You cannot."

The startled hermit glared from his nurseling to Margaret, and from her to him, in amazement, equalled only by his agitation at her so unexpected return. The child lay asleep on his left arm, and she was at his right knee; no longer the pale, scared, panting girl he had overpowered so easily an hour or two ago, but an imperial beauty, with blushing cheeks and sparkling eyes, and lips sweetly parted in triumph, and her whole face radiant with a look he could not quite read; for he had never yet seen it on her; Maternal Pride.

He stared and stared from the child to her, in throbbing amazement.

Then Margaret saw the time was come for that appeal to his reason she had purposely reserved till persuasion should have paved the way for conviction.

¹ Craft. He means trade or profession.

So the smith first softens the iron by fire, and then brings down the sledge hammer.

She showed him, but in her own good straightforward Dutch, that his present life was only a higher kind of selfishness, spiritual egotism; whereas a priest had no more right to care only for his own soul than only for his own body. That was not *his* path to heaven. "But," said she, "whoever yet lost his soul by saving the souls of others! the Almighty loves him who thinks of others; and when He shall see thee caring for the souls of the folk the Duke hath put into thine hand, He will care ten times more for thy soul than He does now."

Gerard was struck by this remark. "Art shrewd in dispute," said he.

"Far from it," was the reply, "only my eyes are not bandaged with conceit.¹ So long as Satan walks the whole earth, tempting men, and so long as the sons of Belial do never lock themselves in caves, but run like ants to and fro corrupting others, the good man that skulks apart plays the devil's game, or at least gives him the odds: thou a soldier of Christ? ask thy comrade Denys, who is but a soldier of the Duke, ask him if ever he skulked in a hole and shunned the battle because forsooth in battle is danger as well as glory and duty. For thy sole excuse is fear; thou makest no secret on't. Go to, no duke nor king hath such cowardly soldiers as Christ hath. What was that you said in the church at Rotterdam, about the man in the parable that buried his talent in the earth, and so offended the giver? Thy wonderful gift for preaching, is it not a talent, and a gift from thy Creator?"

"Certes; such as it is."

"And hast thou laid it out? or buried it? To whom hast thou preached these seven months? to bats and owls? Hast buried it in one hole with thyself and thy once good wits?"

"The Dominicans are the friars' preachers. 'Tis for preaching they were founded, so thou art false to Dominic as well as to his Master."

¹I think she means prejudice.

"Do you remember, Gerard, when we were young together, which now are old before our time, as we walked handed in the fields, did you but see a sheep cast, ay, three fields off, you would leave your sweet-heart (by her good will) and run and lift the sheep for charity? Well, then, at Gouda is not one sheep in evil plight, but a whole flock; some cast, some strayed, some sick, some tainted, some a being devoured, and all for the want of a shepherd. Where is their shepherd? lurking in a den like a wolf, a den in his own parish; out fie! out fie!

"I scented thee out, in part, by thy kindness to the little birds. Take note, you Gerard Eliassoen must love something, 'tis in your blood; you were born to't. Shunning man, you do but seek earthly affection a peg lower than man."

Gerard interrupted her. "The birds are God's creatures, His innocent creatures, and I do well to love them, being God's creatures."

"What, are they creatures of the same God that we are, that he is who lies upon thy knee?"

"You know they are."

"Then what pretence for shunning us and being kind to them? Sith man is one of the animals, why pick him out to shun? Is't because he is of animals the paragon? What, you court the young of birds, and abandon your own young? Birds need but bodily food, and having wings, deserve scant pity if they cannot fly and find it. But that sweet dove upon thy knee, he needeth not carnal only, but spiritual food. He is thine as well as mine; and I have done my share. He will soon be too much for me, and I look to Gouda's parson to teach him true piety and useful lore. Is he not of more value than many sparrows?"

Gerard started and stammered an affirmation. For she waited for his reply.

"You wonder," continued she, "to hear me quote Holy Writ so glib. I have pored over it this four years, and why? Not because God wrote it, but because I saw it often in thy hands ere thou didst leave me.

Heaven forgive me, I am but a woman. What thinkest thou of this sentence, 'Let your work so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven'! What is a saint in a sink better than 'a light under a bushel'?

"Therefore, since the sheep committed to thy charge bleat for thee and cry, 'Oh, desert us no longer, but come to Gouda manse;' since I, who know thee ten times better than thou knowest thyself, do pledge my soul, it is for thy soul's weal to go to Gouda manse—since duty to thy child, too long abandoned, calls thee to Gouda manse—since thy sovereign, whom holy writ again bids thee honour, sends thee to Gouda manse—since the Pope, whom the Church teaches thee to revere, hath absolved thee of thy monkish vows, and orders thee to Gouda manse——"

"Ah?"

"Since thy grey-haired mother watches for thee in dole and care, and turneth oft the hour-glass and sigheth sore that thou comest so slow to her at Gouda manse—since thy brother, withered by thy curse, awaits thy forgiveness and thy prayers for his soul, now lingering in his body, at Gouda manse—take thou up in thine arms the sweet bird with crest of gold that nestles to thy bosom, and give me thy hand; thy sweet-heart erst and wife, and now thy friend, the truest friend to thee this night that ere man had, and come with me to Gouda manse!"

"It is the voice of an angel!" cried Clement loudly.

"Then hearken it, and come forth to Gouda manse!"

The battle was won.

XXIV.

In compliance with a custom I despise, but have not the spirit to resist, I linger on the stage to pick up the smaller fragments of humanity I have scattered about; that is, some of them, for the wayside characters have no claim on me; they have served their turn if they have persuaded the reader that Gerard travelled from

Holland to Rome through human beings, and not through a population of dolls.

Eli and Catherine lived to a great age; lived so long, that both Gerard and Margaret grew to be dim memories. Giles also was longevous; he went to the court of Bavaria, and was alive there at ninety, but had somehow turned into bones and leather, trumpet toned.

Cornelis, free from all rivals, and forgiven long ago by his mother, who clung to him more and more now all her brood was scattered, waited and waited and waited for his parents' decease. But Catherine's shrewd word came true; ere she and her mate wore out, this worthy rusted away. At sixty-five he lay dying of old age in his mother's arms, a hale woman of eighty-six. He had lain unconscious a while, but came to himself *in articulo mortis*, and seeing her near him, told her how he would transform the shop and premises as soon as they should be his. "Yes, my darling," said the poor old woman soothingly, and in another minute he was clay, and that clay was followed to the grave by all the feet whose shoes he had waited for.

Denys, broken-hearted at his comrade's death, was glad to return to Burgundy, and there a small pension the court allowed him kept him until unexpectedly he inherited a considerable sum from a relation. He was known in his native place for many years as a crusty old soldier, who could tell good stories of war when he chose, and a bitter railer against women.

Jerome, disgusted with northern laxity, retired to Italy, and having high connections became at seventy a mitred abbot. He put on the screw of discipline; his monks revered and hated him. He ruled with iron rod ten years. And one night he died—alone; for he had not found the way to a single heart. The Vulgate was on his pillow, and the crucifix in his hand, and on his lips something more like a smile than was ever seen there while he lived; so that, methinks, at that awful hour he was not quite alone. *Requiescat in pace.* The Master he served has many servants, and they have many minds, and now and then a faithful one will be a surly one, as it is in these our mortal mansions.

The yellow-haired laddie, Gerard Gerardson, belongs not to Fiction but to History. She has recorded his birth in other terms than mine. Over the tailor's house in the Brede Kirk Straet she has inscribed :

Hæc est parva domus natus qua magnus Erasmus ;

and she has written half-a-dozen lives of him. But there is something left for her yet to do. She has no more comprehended magnum Erasmum, than any other pigmy comprehends a giant, or partisan a judge.

First scholar and divine of his epoch, he was also the heaven-born dramatist of his century. Some of the best scenes in this new book are from his mediæval pen, and illumine the pages where they come; for the words of a genius so high as his are not born to die: their immediate work upon mankind fulfilled, they may seem to lie torpid; but at each fresh shower of intelligence Time pours upon their students, they prove their immortal race; they revive, they spring from the dust of great libraries; they bud, they flower, they fruit, they seed, from generation to generation, and from age to age.

SUMMARY OF THE STORY

THE hero is Gerard Eliassoen (I.), son of Catherine and Elias of Tergou, in Holland, who is intended for the Church but who falls in love with Margaret, daughter of Peter Brandt (II.). Owing to the opposition of his parents and to the hatred of the Burgomaster of Tergou, Ghysbrecht Van Swieten, who is afraid lest Gerard should discover that he has defrauded the Brandts of some property left them by Floris Brandt, he is imprisoned, but escapes (III.). Together with Margaret, and her attendant and friend, Martin Wittenhaagen, he is pursued by the Burgomaster (IV., V., VI. and VII.). On escaping, he leaves Margaret in charge of Martin (VIII.), and makes for Rome, having decided to make use of his clerical abilities where there is a demand for them. On the way he falls in with Denys (IX.), a Burgundian soldier, and together they meet with a series of astounding adventures (X.-XIII.). On one occasion Denys saves Gerard's life when pursued by a bear (X.), and the latter rescues his friend from drowning. However, they are forcibly separated: Denys is impressed into the Burgundian army and Gerard goes to Augsburg (XIV.). He narrates his adventures by letter to Margaret, and tells how he reaches Rome (XV., XVI. and XVII.). In the meantime Margaret, who had been solemnly betrothed to Gerard in presence of witnesses, a ceremony as binding as marriage, endures great privations. She is helped by Gerard's old friend, Margaret Van Eyck, and ultimately by Catherine and Elias. She gives birth to a son, and he becomes her solace amidst her anxiety as to Gerard. Gerard's pardon for prison-breaking and for taking away Floris Brandt's deed, which he accidentally discovered while in prison (IV.), is obtained by Martin from the Duke of Burgundy; and this is to be forwarded by Margaret Van Eyck by means of Hans Memling, an artist who is going to Rome. Two of Gerard's brothers, Cornelis and Sybrandt, who have always hated him because he was the most loved son, in collusion with the Burgomaster, take out the pardon and Margaret Brandt's letter, and insert one apparently written by Margaret Van Eyck

announcing to Gerard Margaret's death (XVIII.). Gerard, who has become renowned at Rome, and who has rapidly made money and fame, has rejected the love of a noble princess of the house of Colonna, and she, in revenge, hires a bravo to assassinate him. At this juncture, and after booking his passage home, the forged letter reaches him, and in agony of mind, in desperation and despair, at the news (XIX.), he plunges into a life of dissipation and debauchery, and finally, to end his misery and remorse, throws himself into the Tiber. He is rescued by the very bravo hired to slay him, and recovers consciousness in a monastery of the Dominicans. In hopes of becoming useful in the world, and in token of repentance for his sins, he becomes a monk, and is known as Brother Clement (XX.). Owing to his oratorical powers he is chosen to become a professor at Basle, and afterwards to help to sustain the influence of the Dominicans, as opposed to the Franciscans, in England. In the meantime Margaret has given him up for dead, but she is somewhat consoled by hearing of all his adventures, and of his fidelity, from Denys. The Eliassoens are about to set up Cornelis and Sybrandt in business at Rotterdam, where Margaret now lives, and they meet with and cherish her once more. They hear of a famous preacher who is attracting large congregations at the Church of St. Laurens, Rotterdam. Margaret goes there one lovely Sunday afternoon, and in the preacher she recognises her Gerard (XXI.), who has reached Rotterdam, and is about to take ship for England. The recognition is mutual, but the effect on Brother Clement is one of horror mixed with intense anger against those who have kept him and his wife apart for ever, and pity and love for Margaret. After cursing his treacherous brothers in their new home, he flies and hides himself in a cave, where he lives a hermit's life.

His dwarfish brother Giles has become a favourite at Court, and has obtained for him the living of Gouda, but for six months nothing is heard of the vicar. Margaret, who has become rich owing to a legacy from Margaret Van Eyck, and owing to restitution of the stolen property by Ghysbrecht, at last discovers him, and the two pour out their mutual love (XXII.), though Gerard still has to combat his feelings of horror at being a priest while loving Margaret, and though she is in the unhappy position of being neither maid, wife, nor widow. Little Gerard forms the tie linking them indissolubly in this difficult situation. The father dedicates his life to his parochial duties, the mother devotes herself to Gerard the younger, and to the sick and bereaved, while the son is sent to a school at Deventer, and afterwards becomes the famous Erasmus (XXIII., XXIV.). For ten years the lovers are happy and yet discontented: they

watch their son grow up; they love each other in secret, though they must suppress all outward manifestations of their love; and they risk their lives in ministration to all those who need their help. Finally, Margaret catches the plague while visiting her son, and dies, leaving Brother Clement in a state of agonising grief and sorrow. He performs the last priestly duties to his wife, and then, aged and weary of life, he enters the nearest Dominican convent as a novice, and there dies.

LIFE OF CHARLES READE

CHARLES READE, novelist and playwright, was born at Ipsden in 1814, and was the son of an Oxfordshire squire. He was educated at Iffley, and thence went to Magdalen College, Oxford, where he took his degree in Arts in 1835. He entered Lincoln's Inn to prepare for the bar, and was "called" in 1843. After many tours at home and abroad (during which period he was studying, he tells us, the art of Fiction), he finally entered the literary world, not as a novelist, but as a playwright. His first play, *Gold*, produced in 1853, proved a very moderate success. In 1856, he published his best known story, *It is never too late to mend*, attempting successfully to produce by its means an amelioration of the conditions of prison life. This book met with a hearty welcome, and is still widely read. In 1853 he issued *Peg Woffington*, and in 1853 *Christie Johnson*, the former being dramatised in 1852 as *Masks and Faces*, his most successful play. Between 1857 and 1860 he produced five novels, while in 1861 appeared *The Cloister and the Hearth* in complete form. Portions of it had appeared in a periodical entitled *Once a Week*, but he himself assures us that the book was largely rewritten, and was not a mere collection of those portions already published. This, his best book, Mr. Swinburne places among the very greatest masterpieces of narrative. "Its tender truthfulness of sympathy," he says, "its ardour and depth of feeling, the constant sweetness of its humour, the frequent passion of its pathos, are qualities in which no other tale of adventure so stirring, and incident so inexhaustible, can pretend to a moment's comparison with it."

In 1863, Reade published *Hard Cash*, in which he exposed the cruelties prevalent at private lunatic asylums, and which led to inquiries into the conduct of these institutions, and legislation for them.

Put yourself in his Place, 1870, was designed to make the British public acquainted with the tyrannies exercised by Trade Unions: while *A Woman Hater*, 1877, was a zealous defence of women's rights.

Reade died in 1884.

His books exercised much influence during his lifetime, and were productive of good; he was more than a novelist who merely amuses. His works are packed with detail, and display wide knowledge, not only of humanity, but of historical, geographical, and scientific facts. His style betrays his personality; it is occasionally grotesque, and his pen pictures are often too highly coloured. Yet he never loses his grip of his reader's attention, and his earnestness is manifest and convincing.

He ranks with the best of second-rate authors, if he is not amongst the select few who are of the highest rank

NOTES

I.

To give the language a medieval colouring, Reade uses a number of archaic forms and constructions. For example: *wend*, *shoon*, in Chapter VIII.; *placen* in Chapter XVI.; *strawen*, *St. Mark his church*, in Chapter XVII.

still, always.

Brothers Van Eyck. Two Flemish painters. They are given the credit of being the first men to paint in oil colours, and to have perfected the method of mixing colours with oil.

two quarters, *i.e.* of a florin or guilder.

lapis-lazuli, a mineral of azure colour, from which the pigment ultramarine is made. It was formerly much used in ornamental work.

Terence, 185-159 B.C. The Roman comedy-writer.

II.

Gerard competes at Rotterdam for a writing prize offered by Philip "the Good." On his way he makes the acquaintance of Margaret Brandt and her father, and thus falls under the displeasure of the Burgomaster of Tergou. Van Swieten lives in constant dread lest his theft of money and property belonging to the Brandts should be discovered, and, therefore, he keeps Gerard under watch, and finally attempts to separate him from his new friends by exposing to Elias his love for Margaret, knowing that the father intends his son for the Church.

Scapulary, a portion of a monastic dress, so called from its being worn on the shoulders—Lat. *scapula*, the shoulder. Martin's form of hood would be so called because of its similarity in form to the monkish "scapula."

Schiedam, a town in S. Holland, $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles W. of Rotterdam. Hollands gin is made here still in some 300 distilleries.

III.

When Van Swieten first sees Gerard in the company of the Brandts, as all of them are on their way to Rotterdam to witness the competitions, he casts on him a look expressive of keen hostility, merely because he finds him with them.

I doubt I shall see no more, I fear I shall see no more.

Stadthouse, town hall.

IV.

planet struck. It was believed that the planets influenced the lives and characters of men : to be *planet struck* was to be under the malign influence of one of the planets. Some people still believe that the moon causes madness, and speak of others being 'moon struck.'

Stop thief! Ghysbrecht is agitated, thinking, rightly, that Gerard has taken away the title deeds of the Brandts' property, illegally in his possession. This parchment was amongst those found by Gerard when imprisoned.

He repeated it ... Margaret Van Eyck had advised Gerard to journey to Rome, where artists found a ready market for their work.

rede, advice.

V.

The Burgomaster is unable to sleep all night, dreading lest his villainy should be exposed; when the storm is over, he rides to Margaret's home at Sevenbergen to recover the parchment, and to recapture Gerard.

The fiery old man was of course the Burgomaster.

Peter's house, Peter Brandt's house.

Two men can hate ... Cf. *Merchant of Venice*, Act IV. Sc. i. line 66. stiver, a coin of Holland equal to 1d.; $\frac{1}{16}$ th part of a guilder—florin.

Culpa mea, it is my fault.

VI.

A cry more tuneable ..., *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act IV. Sc. i. lines 125, etc.

VII.

Ventre à terre, at full speed.

dramatis personae, characters of the play.

VIII.

bodkin, cf. *Hamlet*, Act III. Sc. i. line 76.

Omne solum forti patria, to a brave man all the earth is a fatherland.

IX.

The break in that portion of the narrative contained in this chapter, carries Gerard and Denys forward over many a league, in the course of which they enlivened themselves by entertaining conversations. If they did not find a town inn at which to spend the night, a roadside inn, or a convent, or a cowhouse, or even the shelter of a tree sufficed.

truckle bed, a bed that runs on wheels under a larger one.

Ganymede, the cup-bearer of Zeus, the chief of the Greek gods. He was the most beautiful of mortals, attracted the notice of Zeus, and was carried off to him by the eagle of the god.

arbalest, or crossbow. It consisted of a wooden stock with a bow made of wood, iron, or steel, crossing it at right angles. The bolt, or quarrel, was shot by means of a lever, held in position by a catch or trigger.

Courage ..., have courage, the devil is dead.

Il a bien fait ..., he has done well; with the water and with linen of the country he would be blackened beyond recognition.

Tiens ..., Hulloo! here's a man who speaks French, or something like it.

animalcula, what we should call 'mites.'

quadrivious, in four directions from a common point.

c'est bien ..., that's all right, my boy; a cleverer man than you is no fool!

drank garausses, emptied bumpers (Germ. *geraus*, right out).

Charon, a mythical character whose duty it was to ferry the shades of the dead across the Styx, one of the rivers of Hades.

Aristides was an Athenian citizen, famous for his honesty. He was ostracised, and one of the Athenians on being asked why he had voted for his exile, said that he was tired of hearing him called 'the Just.'

Bon loup ..., a good wolf is a bad companion, said the sheep.

les loups ..., wolves do not eat one another.

à bien petite ..., on a very slight pretext the wolf seized the sheep.

lealty, loyalty.

sith, since.

four bones, four limbs.

consigne, pass-word.

kye, kine's, examples of Reade's archaisms.

too, too solid flesh, *Hamlet*, Act i. Sc. ii. line 129.

nods, and becks, etc., Milton's *L'Allegro*, line 28.

tout le monde, every one.

en avant, forward!

sans rancune, without ill will.

grogam, a dress stuff made of a mixture of silk and mohair.

louted, bowed.

indifferent well sewn, cf. *Hamlet*, Act III. Sc. i. line 123.

leman, sweetheart.

Seven champions. St. George of England, St. Denys of France, St. James of Spain, St. Anthony of Italy, St. Andrew of Scotland, St. Patrick of Ireland, St. David of Wales.

petrone, petronel, an ancient and clumsy description of pistol.

harquebuss, or arquebus, was the first form of hand gun comparable with the modern musket. It was fired from the chest, and hence the aim of the arquebusier was uncertain.

X.

c'est égal, we should say 'we are quits.'

marchons ! let us go on.

plaît-il ? what do you say ?

set off running, Denys went back in order to skin the bear.

XI.

The friends, informed against by a doctor whom they had offended, were pursued by officers of the law. Once outside of the See of Cologne they were safe, since their offence had been committed within the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Cologne.

regalles, small organ, sometimes so small as to be held in the palm.

exorcist, one able to cast out evil spirits.

assoiled, absolved from sin.

orisons, prayers.

corpus domat aqua, water tames the body.

XII.

plunge in the Rhine, Gerard saved Denys' life by jumping into the river, and dragging him to shore.

forefinger of his right hand, an archer so maimed would be unable to use his bow.

angel, an English gold coin worth 6s. 8d. in Edward IV.'s reign.

Que nenni, nay ! nay ! *nenni* means 'not at all.'

écu, gros écu, 6 livres ; petit écu, 3 francs.

guetapens, ambush, ambuscade.

parbleu, forsooth !

drôle, thief.

XIII.

buvons ..., let us drink, comrades.

pièces de conviction, objects produced as a proof of guilt.

ace of that fair quint, in the card game 'picquet' a quint is a sequence of five cards of the same suit: ace, king, queen, etc.

XIV.

When this was disposed of. The landlady of an inn at which the comrades had stayed had sent a messenger after them asking Gerard to go back, and proffering him a ring which he refused.

Remiremont, in the Department of Vosges in France.

still, always.

liever, rather.

Tête d'Or. This was an inn where the travellers had stayed. The landlady wished Gerard to marry her. She gave him a ring having upon it the inscription quoted in this chapter.

XV.

The story now returns to Margaret's troubles and sorrows, and goes on to narrate how Denys was wounded and invalided to Holland. He discovers the whereabouts of Margaret, wins her gratitude for his loyalty to his friend, and finally brings about a reconciliation between her and Gerard's relations.

speered, asked.

XVI.

in litter, Gerard had become secretary to a merchant travelling to Venice, who made him sit with him in his horse litter. They travelled in company with other merchants and their servants, as a precaution against robbers.

Brant vein, literally 'burnt wine.' Brandy is meant, formerly it was called 'brand wine,' or 'brandy wine.'

momently, immediately.

batzen, a coin worth about 1d.

mangonel, a military engine throwing darts as well as stones.

glaive, broadsword.

maugre, in spite of.

in placen, in places.

XVII.

orbis, non urbis, forum, the market place not of the city but of the world.

hoy, a small coasting vessel, differing little from a 'smack'; often used for conveying goods to a ship from the shore.

eyne, eyes.

a had died, he had died.

thof, though.

XVIII.

Gerard reached Rome in safety, after being shipwrecked, and there he quickly achieved fame. The Princess Claelia, of the house of Colonna, fell in love with him, and hired him to paint her portrait, but her love was rejected by Gerard. Having amassed a large sum of money, he decided to keep away from the Palace Caesarini, where the Princess lived.

la lingua . . . , the tongue can break the back though it has no bones itself. The Princess Claelia in these words advises Gerard not to betray her love for one who was so far beneath her in rank.

Anthony belike. Anthony of Thebes, born in 251 A.D., lived a hermit's life in the wilderness. On one occasion he was tempted by a beautiful woman to leave his hermitage, but he resisted the temptation.

XIX.

Fra Colonna, Friar or Brother Colonna.

Fra Jerome, had displayed, together with Gerard, heroic bravery, when both had been shipwrecked on the coast between Naples and Rome.

XX.

Dominic de Guzman founded at Toulouse in 1215 the order of Dominicans. They were an order of friars bound by vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. In England they were known as Black Friars.

Messer, sir.

Teresa's husband, Gerard had saved Teresa's life when the ship in which they were sailing to Rome was wrecked on the Italian coast. She, in return, had befriended him during the early part of his sojourn in Rome.

Juliers, about 20 miles W. of Cologne.

XXI.

Jorian Ketel, he was one of the men who had pursued Margaret, Gerard, and Martin at the bidding of the Burgomaster. He was at this time grave-digger.

tonsure, a religious observance of the Roman Catholic Church which consists in shaving the crown of the head as a sign of the dedication of the person to the service of God.

XXIII.

After the two lovers had met once more, Margaret exerted all her powers of persuasion to get Gerard to re-enter the world. At first her efforts were fruitless, and she was sternly rebuked and driven away. But she had left little Gerard behind her, and after a time she went back to the cave determined to resume her task, this time successfully.

retro Sathanas, get thee behind me, Satan.

cllice, hair shirt.

I scented thee out Gerard had fed the birds during the cold weather, and had made pets of them.

of animals the paragon, cf. *Hamlet*, Act II. Sc. 2.

since thy brother ... , Gerard had visited Cornelis and Sybrandt after finding out that Margaret was alive, and had cursed them. Sybrandt, in a drunken frolic, had climbed on the roof of an inn, had fallen, and had injured his spine.

XXIV.

The reader will see from the Summary that ten years were spent by Margaret and Gerard in charitable deeds, in visiting the sick, and in the performance of parochial duties by the latter, before death separated the lovers. Gerard did not long survive his wife.

in articulo mortis, at the point of death.

Magnus Erasmus. Erasmus was born in 1467, and died in 1536. He was a great friend of Sir Thomas More, and visited England several times. He wrote books in opposition to Luther's opinions, but he also attacked the abuses in the Church of Rome.

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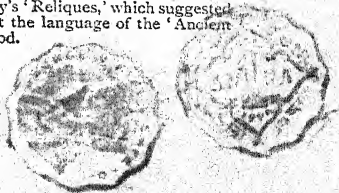
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